



Huracan 2: Whirlwind

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BY MAHLATSE MOKONE

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CHAPTER 1

Patricia, my intern, looked at me intently while taking down some of the things I was telling her on her sleek iPad. We were on our way to a meeting with a new client and I wanted to be on top of my game for this particular one. I snickered inwardly, damn the boss for laying this one on me. "Read through it." I said to her and she quickly went over my notes and points and I nodded. "Perfect." I said, satisfied.

I go over everything in fine detail, that's what makes me good at my job. And it's because I'm good at my job, that I don't get anxious, but I was surprised to find a twinge of nervousness in me. *No, I'm not nervous...just apprehensive*, I thought to myself, which is completely natural in this peculiar situation. Patricia knew her place, knew what to say and when, it's one of the things I like about her. But I could see she's just dying to ask me more about this.

I knew she'd given up when she looked at me, "So let me get this straight, our client is Wright Incorporated and your husband is the boss, so technically your husband is our client?" she asked. I sighed inwardly, "Yes, Patricia, my husband is our client." I said and I could see her stifle a smile. "I'm guessing you're not overjoyed about it." She said and a small smile graced the corner of my mouth. "No, I'm not." I said.

"Landing Wright Inc. is a huge deal, these guys are the best and demand the best, and of course you know that." My boss said to me when I tried to reason myself out of this. "I do." I said calmly. "But..." "Mr. Wright will also expect nothing less and you are one of my best people." He added. "Thank you sir, but surely there's someone else who can handle this." I said, and his brows furrow. "Unfortunately everyone is packed full, I know you just closed another client two weeks ago, so you have room for one more." He said.

I sighed, "With all due respect sir, you do know that my name is Zoe Wright, I'm the CEO's wife." I said with an exasperated tone. Mr. Brooks nodded, "I understand this is a bit unusual for you, but I know you're professional and good at what you do." He said, "Besides, it's not often we deal directly with the head honchos." He added with a smile. True, but Andrew is a hands on type of person, both in his business and personal life, which means it's most likely he'll be involved.

I walked out of his office knowing I don't have a leg to stand on. Wright Inc. is making waves in the investment world right now, of course Andrew is smart, he knows what to sign off on, what to drop, and when. I knew we were bound to cross paths sometime in future, I just hoped I'd be far away when that happens. Yes I was good, but it's bullshit that no one else was available for this deal. I work at Nixon Brooks, the biggest investment and consulting firm in the whole continent. We have hundreds of qualified Actuaries more than adequate for the task but no; it just had to be *me*.

I knew for sure that wasn't by chance, although he'd never admit it, but I know Andrew requested me in particular. Mr. Brooks is an intelligent man, he didn't get where he is by not capitalizing on good business when he sees it and Wright Inc. is a big fish in the pond. So I'm guessing when the boss of that company says jump he'd be too quick in saying how high. Andrew didn't tell me he'd approached my firm for the Pierce & Sons pursuit.

I didn't know until Mr. Brooks called me in and told me their proposal and that I was the woman on call. He and I got into it that night, well I did, he just calmly listened to me rant. He gave me one of his sexy smiles, "You do realize you're chastising a client?" he said and completely perplexed, I just scowled at him. "Okay look, Pierce & Sons is a big whale and if I'm going to capture it, I need a lethal team, you know there's no one better than Nixon Brooks." He said, "Yes we're good but why do I have to be the one in charge?" I said, He shrugged innocently, spreading his arms on the headrest.

"Don't look at me, I don't know. I told Mr. Brooks to give me his best people and he should, I'm paying him good money for his services." He said and yet again, lost for words I glared at him. He sighed and stood up, "Why does the prospect of working with me upset you?" he asked, "Normally I'd welcome the challenge of working with you." I said and he grinned, "Good, then what's the problem?" he asked.

I raised my eyebrows at him, "You're my husband!" I said and he leaned closer to me, "Come on, we're both professional enough to leave business outside that door and our relationship inside it." He murmured, when he got this close my anger simmered away. I knew he was right but still. He made a move to touch me and I slapped his hand away, refusing to cave.

He softly chuckled, "Eight years together and you're still as frisky as when I met you." He said, pulling me against him. "And you're still as overbearing." I said with a begrudging smile and he kissed me and just like that the row was over.

I shook my head slightly looking out the tinted window of my chauffeured Mercedes Benz while I absently played with my instantaneous diamond wedding ring.

Yes I'm a professional woman but I also know I'm a woman helplessly in love with Andrew Wright. How am I supposed to give a hundred and ten percent to my job when Andrew's gorgeous butt is there distracting me every step of the way? Hell, I can hardly take work home. But regardless of him, bagging a company as big as his would look good on my record and I do love a challenge.

To avoid any sort of hiccups I've prepared well, I do this all the time but even Patricia must've wondered why I was making extra provisions.

Our relationship is strictly professional so she hasn't met Andrew yet. With my last name in the company name, she was bound to put two and two together. The car stopped outside the Sandton head offices. I looked at the tall dark glass building, I'd only ever driven passed it on the rare occasions when Andrew and I rode together. The Nixon Brooks offices were not that far from here.

Martin opened my door and I smiled at him when a text came in and I chuckled inwardly when I saw it's from Kay, *Good luck!* It wrote with a condescending little smiley face accompanying it.

Oh shut up. I replied, since when does she wish me luck before a meeting with a client? She loved this, and she didn't have the decency to hide it. I briefly glanced at my cream sheath dress and black pumps. Satisfied that I look like I know my stuff. Patricia and I went up the steps and through the automatic doors, stepping into the sleek reception. I went to one of the two women behind the desk; she greeted me with a polite smile.

"Zoe Wright, Nixon Brooks." I told her and I saw a flash of surprise on her face when I said my name. She briefly glanced at my left hand and I could see the wheels turning in that blond head of hers and she gave her head a slight shake as she typed on her computer. I guess she concluded there's no way I'm married to the boss, just a coincidence.

I wasn't sure if I should feel offended by that.

"Ah yes, for a meeting at 10 am," She said, "Please take a seat, someone will be with you shortly." She said and I nodded, moving to sit on the plush lounge of the reception, decorated with the company's purple and blue colors. We were ten minutes early and it didn't take long before a woman approached us, I stood to shake her hand, we exchanged pleasantries and she introduced herself. Caroleen deLange, the project's admin lady.

"I hope you haven't been waiting all that long." She said as she led the way to the elevators. "No, I'm just early." I pointed out and she gave a small chuckle. We stopped on the 24th floor, the second last one. She didn't attempt at any small talk as she led the way. When we walked into a conference room there were people present, but much to my relief, no sign of Andrew. Caroleen introduced me to M.D who then took the reins to introduce me to everyone else.

The CFO and lawyer were also present, the rest were the team assigned to the Pierce & Sons project. Thankfully I wasn't made to feel weird, even though I'm positive everyone in this room knows who I 'am. "Now that we're all here, shall we begin?" The M.D said and I was pleasantly surprised, my husband wasn't going to be present in this meeting. The head coordinator stood up and begun her presentation.

It was about five minutes into the meeting when the conference doors opened and Andrew came gliding in. My heart sped up, an involuntary reaction I couldn't do anything about. Everyone stood when the MD did and shook his hand, they said a word or two we couldn't make out. He was wearing a black suit with my favorite tie—which I'm sure he did on purpose—he left while I was still asleep so I was seeing him for the first time today.

I guess I shouldn't feel too blitzed; I'm also wearing his favorite dress, well one of many. He gave me a polite smile extending his hand and I gave it my no nonsense shake. "Mr. Wright, I wasn't expecting you to be joining us." I said, and I could feel everyone's eyes on us now. "As you know I have a lot riding on this project. I asked for the best, so I wanted to see the best in action." He said and smiled politely at him. He give me a quick once over I'm sure everyone else missed, it would've been completely inappropriate had he not been my husband. He walked to the head of the conference table.

I took a deep breath and sat down with everyone else, hoping I have my wits about me.

"Looks like the CEO will be sitting in." The MD announced to everyone, I could see Patricia trying not to stare at Andrew, poor girl; she wasn't desensitized like the rest of us. "Pardon the interruption, please continue." He said to the coordinator who took a few seconds pause before continuing. Her voice was not as measured as it was before then I realized, its Andrew's sudden appearance that has her a little flustered.

I stifled a smile; clearly this is the first time she's ever had her boss' undivided attention. She wasn't on her side, for that to happen today of all days, in front of me no less.

Soon it was my turn to make my case, I stood up and made my presentation. Proposing what would be the correct course of action when approaching this project and how best to get control of Pierce & Sons. Patricia handed out Nixon Brooks files with the plan outlined.

I walked around the table a bit; I've found doing that keeps everyone's attention on me and gave me total command of the whole room.

I needed that especially when my husband's stormy hazel gaze was fixated on me. I only looked at him when it would be weird not to anymore.

The CFO and coordinator were the most vocal, asking questions and sometimes contradicting me. I was glad to find that they weren't afraid to challenge me just because I'm the boss' wife. Which made me feel more in my element; I wouldn't be able to do what I do without being able to argue my point with infallible accuracy.

Towards the end of my presentation Andrew was the one to take a swing at me, his points more technical than the others. Of course having also majored in Risk Management, he knows the processes. I didn't pay much attention to everyone else as I debated with him, but I couldn't help notice the coordinator. She was having trouble hiding the fact that she's happy my husband is giving me a hard time. I chuckled inwardly; this was for their benefit, I know Andrew, this was his way of telling them he wasn't going to give me any special treatment.

I showed him off anyway, I was the specialist and I tried not to smirk at him when he relented.

Soon the MD adjourned the meeting but not before Andrew looked at me and told me more than asked to have a word. I shook hands with the MD and CFO, told Patricia to wait for me in the lounge close to the elevators before following Andrew out. We walked in silence, and he gestured into a sizable corner office. I'd never been in here; it looked so Andrew, that I couldn't imagine his father in here too. I wondered if he'd taken a completely different office after him. Its nicest feature was the view of Sandton from two sides.

"You're good, I'm impressed." He said, glad to hear his professional tone still in tact. "Thank you." I replied likewise. I grew apprehensive again when he hit a button on his desk and the glass walls of his office frosted, blocking the view inside. "Please." He gestured for me to sit and I took one of the seats opposite him.

"I'm interested in your method of approach." He said, "Pierce & Sons' stocks have dropped in the last year. We're in a position to strong arm them." He added.

I lifted my chin; "I believe you're familiar with the idea of amputating the arm in order to save the body Mr. Wright." I said, "That's what Pierce & Sons might do if we make a robust approach. Yes, they're vulnerable now, but they might sanction a few of their divisions, it will cost them a sizable percent of their average turnover." I said "But their stocks in other sectors will grow and yield just enough returns to keep them on the safe side when the market rises. That will make it extremely hard for you to gain a proper foothold." I added and Andrew paused a second, thinking about it then stood up from his office chair, came around to my side and leaned against his table.

He gave me a satisfied smile, "You've done your math." He said, "And you know yours." I added and we stared at each other. That all too familiar attraction crackling between us, "I look forward to more of your input." He said and I stood up shaking hands again and my heart sped up when he didn't let go of my hand. Oh he was standing way too close too.

"You are captivating, I couldn't tear my eyes away from you in that conference room." He said softly, "So beautiful, strong and intelligent." He added caressing my cheek with his other

hand. Then I knew I wasn't talking to a client anymore, I was talking to my husband, who sounded like he wanted to devour me right there and then.

Damn him for putting me in this position, I wasn't strong enough to keep both of us in check when he does this.

"Andrew." I whispered, his sensuous mouth just inches from mine, and shamefully I wanted it so badly. "Please don't, we agreed." It was strictly business outside the corners of our home. He took a second before he lifted his head with a sharp intake of breath. "I know." He said, taking a step back. He gestured for me to go ahead of him and I hate how my legs felt like Jell-O. Then again its not everyday my gorgeous husband pops up to seduce me while on the job. He silently walked me to the elevators.

Patricia jumped to her feet when she saw us approaching. Andrew gave her an acknowledging nod before he faced me after pressing the elevator call button. "You'll be working more closely with the coordinator, she'll contact your people on how things with proceed onwards." He said to me, my client once more. I gave a brief nod, "I look forward to it." I said and the elevator pinged its arrival.

I followed Patricia inside and turned to face Andrew.

"Mrs. Wright." He said in farewell, "Mr. Wright." I said likewise before the elevator doors closed on us. I quietly let out a pent up breath. Patricia was able to hold herself back just until we drove out the sidewalk. "Wow." She breathed, "I might be overstepping here when I say your husband is outrageously hot." She said, "I know." I allowed, "I mean you're beautiful and everything, but wow...I was having trouble concentrating when he was speaking."

I slowly turned my head to look at her, "Its probably not wise mention to the wife—who is also your boss—how you weren't able to do your job, because you were busy swooning over her husband." I said and she frowned. "Of course, pardon me Mrs. Wright." She said and I gave her a small smile, "I'm letting this one slide, and the next, you'll need time." I offered and she chuckled.

I avoided her curious eyes for a few minutes then sighed, "Fine, ask away. Make it count because it's not happening twice. And you better keep whatever I say now to yourself if you know what's good for you." I said and she grinned, quickly nodding.

"How long?" she asked, "Eight years, met him when I was nineteen, I've been hopeless ever since." I said, she gave me a knowing smile "No kidding." She said "But I thought you handled him pretty well." She added and I gave her a smile. "I was surprised, he can speak our language." She said, "He majored in Risk Management too." I said and her brows shot up, "Too?" she repeated, I smirked, "Yeah, he's a bit of an overachiever." I said. "Kids?" she asked, I shook my head "Not yet." I said and turned my head to the window slightly frowning.

A part of me feels like I'm the one whose not ready yet rather than Andrew, I hope he's not pretending to be okay with waiting, because he hasn't been pushing me about it and its worrying me a little.

Yes, I want to have his kids, more than anything but when I do I don't want my career getting in the way. I'm only just settling into a place I want to be in the firm and in my career right now. "You have so much...chemistry. What happened in his office?" Patricia asked and my head snapped back to her with my eyebrow raised. She looked down "Okay, I'm overstepping there." She said.

We got back to the office but I wasn't on par with my normal level of productiveness so I knocked off early. I found Ennis about to start on dinner but I shoed her off. Our sweet housekeeper came here in the morning and knocked off around dinnertime and she got the weekends off. I changed into Andrew's Tuks Alumni shirt, a pair of shorts and left out shoes. I busied myself with the making of dinner after she left, when I was done I popped open a bottle of wine and sipped it in silence.

Andrew and I mostly come back relatively at the same time, so its seldom I'm in the house alone. It was the case too when he left to check in on the other Wright Inc. branches around SA's major cities. It's only in these moments that this house seems bigger than it already is.

Yet again my mind wandered back to the topic of kids. I was about to go put on some music when I heard the garage door open and Andrew soon appeared in the great room. I smiled at him, "Hey." I said as he approached me. "I made dinner." I said, proudly and he didn't seem interested in that. I watched him take the wine glass from me and place it on the counter before hauling me against him. He kissed me silly and I was a tad dazed when he let me breathe. I raised an eyebrow at him, "As per our agreement. Inside these corners you are fair game baby girl." He said before he picked me up, I secured my legs around his hips as he resumed kissing me, making his way to our bedroom. So much for dinner.

CHAPTER 2

I sipped my coffee, looking out the tall glass windows of the living room at the Bryanston skyline, it had a certain charm to it, I decided. It being one of Joburg's richest suburbs, it was beautiful of course but I have a sentimental appreciation of it now. I think Andrew buying this house when he was just a student has something to do with that.

I small smile played at the corners of my lips, so much has happened since then.

"Why haven't you brought him home yet?" Marti asked me once and that's when I knew it was time to stop beating about the bush. She'd met him already, a chance encounter; Andrew was just leaving when Marti paid me a surprise visit. They hit it off like a horse on fire. If I was being honest with myself, I was avoiding introducing Andrew to the rest of my family and he noticed, it hurt him too, and I hated that.

I avoided it because first; taking him home with me was a big deal, it was basically me saying this is the guy I see myself marrying one day. I wasn't ready to make such a move, it was more me than him, I still didn't believe what we had was not going away. Second, I knew taking him home would open the floodgates too. I wasn't worried about my immediate family; I knew they'd love him, but my extended family however would be a problem.

Come Andrew's graduation, that's when I decided to be brave. He graduated cum laude and top of his class and yet he was happier that I asked him to come home to meet my family. Best graduation present I could've given him; is what he called it and that's when I realized, it was a big deal for him too.

I was spot on about my family; they loved him. He didn't think so at first, of course, that first meeting was the only time I saw Andrew being nervous, it was adorable. The look on my family's faces when Andrew suddenly spoke Pedi was unforgettable. One would call that the ultimate icebreaker.

That weekend home was amazing; there was a sense of intimacy sharing that part of my life, of myself with him. That was when I started to believe.

Andrew waited until I graduated myself to propose, I didn't know I could happy cry until that day. We had a long engagement and in between that my fears were realized, my extended family came into the picture and they didn't disappoint.

An interracial relationship was not something they considered normal, nor was it something they wanted to accept and they had no problem voicing that, some more than others.

It was more or less the same with Andrew's family as well, just that they were better at concealing it than mine were. It didn't matter to me what they thought of Andrew and I's relationship, I should've known it didn't matter to Andrew either.

Andrew's trump card was how willingly and diligently he handled all the customs preceding our wedding even if I didn't. You don't get to fully understand the language without understanding the people and their traditions, he said to me when even I was surprised by how much he knew and understood. That sort of won him everyone's respect.

We had our wedding at Singita Boulders Lodge before we flew to Mauritius for our honeymoon. Everything about that precious day still takes my breath away.

Looking back now I can admit to myself, that I was scared. I was just a girl, my path was set, and all I wanted to do then was follow it, no distractions. Then Andrew whirled into my life like a hurricane, and suddenly my path was not as set and simple as I thought and I was scared. Scared of the way of the way he made me feel, of the way he felt about me and I was scared of his affluence. To me we were light years away from each other, and together we didn't make sense to me.

Did that stop Andrew? No, I would try and push him away at the most inane things and he wouldn't budge an inch, he never doubted us, even when I did. In the end I was bound to succumb to his will, his love and I did.

My spine tingled in awareness; "I wish I could get into that pretty little head of yours when you zone out like this." Andrew whispered from behind me, his lips softly brushing against my ear. I smiled leaning back into his warm hard suit clad body. "You can't possibly get into me anymore than you already are." I said, "You want to test that hypothesis?" he murmured, his lips following the length of my neck and I felt him breathe deep.

His scent was the only thing I noticed, I could swear it created a red haze of want. Thinking about it mixed with sweat and sex, had all kinds of indecent thoughts running through my mind. "Rein check on that one." I breathed as I wriggled out of his arms and turned to face him. "Don't look at me like that." I admonished, he knows I can't resist him and I almost never refuse him.

"I have an early meeting, I don't want to go into it bearing the look I get after you make love to me," I said,

He chuckled following me to the kitchen area. I also wanted to be sharp and having mind-numbing sex with him now won't help that cause. I always needed an hour or two to find my wits afterwards. I wouldn't tell him that, he already knows he's too good, so I didn't stroke that huge ego of his.

I leaned against the counter after rinsing my cup and I stared at him.

There was a time I would've heartily argued that he couldn't possibly be more beautiful than he already was but I was wrong. The years agree with him, a lot, like fine wine.

"You're doing it again." He said dryly without looking at me, he took a bite out of the banana loaf sandwich I made for him. He didn't used to eat breakfast, something I put an end to when I moved in with him. He claims I'm as fussy as Betty, his father's housekeeper. In more ways than one she took on the mother figure role in his life after his mother died in car accident when he was just a twelve-year-old boy.

He looked up at me when I didn't respond, his hazel gaze searching. "I want to get off contraception, I want us to try." I said and watched his coffee mug freeze mid air.

I want us to start a family, I know that now, I've been using my career as an excuse to wait. Motherhood is a huge step and I needed to realize that it's okay to be apprehensive. But I want it, bad. In all honesty at twenty-six years old, and in my line of work, there's always going to be some big deal I have to close or some big company I have to take on. He slowly put it down and walked over to me, never looking away from me.

"Are you serious?" he asked and I smiled and nodded fervently. His response was a big smile and a thorough kiss to my lips.

I walked out of the elevator into the 10th floor of the Nixon Brooks building, making a beeline for my office. I found Patricia there ready to start prepping for the meeting. She wasn't supposed to check in for another forty-five minutes, her always being here early and ready speaks volumes about her own drive. She reminded me of myself when I started out.

After graduating, I immediately started working at O.B.D, an assurance firm I had a scholarship with through varsity. I spent about a year and a half there before Nixon Brooks snatched me up. I don't even know how they discovered me but they did, and then basically bought me out of O.B.D. Now being a senior actuary here, I know that the firm makes it a policy to keep track of any promising individuals with great minds.

They get profiles of the best students from the top varsities in South Africa. They recruit some fresh out of varsity and others like Patricia and I; they track their progress for a while, if they like what they see then they poach them. I guess you don't get to be the best investment consulting and assurance firm on the continent without being ruthless and clinical in your endeavors. Seeking the best in every aspect.

"Good, you're here." I said, "Good morning Mrs. Wright." She said as I shrugged out of my jacket, placing it on my armchair. "Your schedule for today." She said placing my day planner in front of me. I sat down on my chair, directly opposite her and shot her a faint smile.

"You're my intern Patricia, not my PA, I give you work and I teach you. Your job is not to make sure my day runs smoothly." I said then she shrugged. I chuckled, she is like me, always proving herself invaluable. She'd always been willing to do both, so I refused a real PA when I was offered one.

"Have you heard anything from the people at Wright Inc.?" I asked, "Nothing so far, the meeting is still on for this Friday morning though." She replied and I nodded. Wright Inc.'s pursuit of Pierce & Sons is almost at the end, the firm never stood a chance but with our guidance it was a done deal. Wright Inc. acquired fifty percent interest in the firm, now the goal was getting majority control then our job will be done.

I must admit I've enjoyed working with them more than I'd care to admit and not just because my gorgeous husband is CEO. Like Nixon Brooks, Wright Inc. has a talented workforce that I'm sure stretch to other divisions of the company. After that first meeting almost two months ago when Andrew decided to sit in, he's given me wide berth and I worked with his project manager and coordinator, the way it should be. Given how important this take over is, I didn't doubt he kept close tabs but he didn't make any surprise sit-ins anymore, much to my gratitude.

Patricia and I prepped for an hour before leaving for one of the conference rooms where I'd called the meeting.

CHAPTER 3

I met up with Kay, my best friend since our varsity days. We decided met up at EastGate Mall in Sandton and I sat in our favorite Café waiting for her. She and I graduated in the same year, though she did a degree in Informatics and now is currently working for an IT company. She's happily married with a two-year-old daughter. Unlike Andrew, Tshepo had the good grace to turn her life inside out on her third year of varsity.

He had just started doing his articles at a big accounting firm. They've been inseparable since, now they live in North Ridding, which is only a sixteen-minute drive from Bryanston. I smiled, waving when I saw her walk in and she grinned, coming over. We hugged then took our seats, "Where's little Leda?" I asked and she chuckled, "Jackie has her hands full with her for now, they're at home." She said and I nodded.

We played catch up for a good two hours. We talked as often as we could over the phone but meeting up like this gets harder with each passing year but we vowed we wouldn't let our lives get in the way too much. It was the same with Maddy, even though she moved to Durban after along graduating with us; we still keep in touch.

We Skyped two weeks ago, where she let us know she's engaged. The wedding is set for December this year. Alexa, the former fourth member of our sisterhood I had no idea about. Our friendship was irrevocably damaged by her pursuit of Andrew; in the end her antics and nastiness also pushed Maddy and Kay away too. "Andrew and I are trying to have a baby." I told Kay and her eyes widened in shock and excitement.

"Get out." She said and I chuckled, shaking my head and she squeezed my hand over the table. "Well it's about damn time." She said and I feigned offense. "Hey." I said, and she gave me an impish smile. "I totally get it Zoe, motherhood is serious business but trust me, you will love it," She said and I didn't doubt it. How she doted on Leda was nothing short of adorable.

"Lets get out of here." I said and she frowned then checked her watch, "Now? Lets stay a little while longer I feel like I haven't seen you in ages." She said and I chuckled.

"No silly we aren't done yet, but I want to go see Talita, come with me," I said, Talita van der Westhuizen was undoubtedly the best fashion designer in Gauteng and probably the whole country. "Oh, what's the occasion?" Kay asked, I only went to Talita if I need an outfit or suggestions for more serious and formal type events. "It's a dinner, one of Andrew's friends is hosting for his company." I said, Andrew had no relations with Dean's company himself but Andrew is pretty high profile in the corporate world, it wouldn't hurt to have I'm on the guest list.

Andrew doesn't always attend half the things he's invited to, but I guess Dean gets special preference because he's a close friend rather than just a business acquaintance.

Kay parked her Alpha Romeo a few blocks from my Mercedes, I pulled out and drove out of the underground parking with her hot on my heels. I've been driving myself more often than not, much to Martin's irritation. He's not having any lucky with Andrew either; he loves to drive his Maserati and BMW himself. Despite that, Martin has a family of his own to take care of now, between them and us; he has his hands full.

Kay and I followed each other to Talita's studio in Woodmead, its around six pm in the evening so normally she wouldn't be in but I called her and she was more than happy to stick

around for me. First time I started working with her, she was just as accommodating but I had a feeling it was thanks to my last name. But now we're actual friends, her favors have nothing to do with that anymore.

When we arrived at her studio it was deserted except for two of her people sorting clothes.

"Zoe, Kay, its so good to see you." She said with her usual cheerfulness, as she hugged us. "You too Talita, you look well, how do you do it? Stay on top of your game and still look good?" I said and she waved her hand dismissively. "Me? How do *you* do it? Crunching numbers all-day and still look so hot. I would've aged a decade doing what you do." She said. Kay chuckled as she flipped through the clothes on the hangers. "That's what I keep wondering." She said, "Lets just agree to disagree." I said and Talita chuckled nodding.

"So what's the occasion?" she asked, "Formal dinner." I said following her to her table. "Did you want me to design something?" she asked and I shook my head at her, "No time, the dinner is this Saturday night." I said, "I wanted to looking into your collection." I said. "What did you have in mind?" Talita asked, looking through her many files.

"A dress, simple but elegant." I said, "Mid length, short, long?" she asked, "Mid length." I said, "You mean something like this?" I heard Kay say behind me and I turned to see her holding up a light peach midi dress, it had a one shoulder long sleeve with a sweetheart neckline. Everything I just described to Talita. "Kay I love you." I said walking to get a closer look, "That's the one. Exactly this color." I said to Talita over my shoulder.

"Done and done." She replied. "On second thought, do you have it in my size? I'm not model thin." I said, Kay snickered and Talita smiled, "I'll go see if I do now." She said before walking away. I turned to glare at Kay, "What? You have a Blake Lively type body that's not exactly big." She said, neither was she, I wanted to point out. "Yeah but its not this thin either." I said. I didn't want to be stick thin, I loved my curves and so did my man but I hit the gym to make sure they stay like this.

I also kept in shape so I can keep up with Andrew and his insatiable ways.

I was pretty sure my body wasn't exactly like the Hollywood starlet's, but with my chest being about 32C, we were similar up top. Talita came back with that dress in exactly my size, "Its my lucky day." I squealed.

"I would've made a plan either way." Talita said and I nodded, like so many times before. "I know." I said. "With this one I suggest high pumps, and a cool clutch, designer." She said with a smile and I nodded, "I think she can dig those up somewhere in that closet of hers. I help myself sometimes." Kay said and we all chuckled. "No accessories right?" I checked.

"You took the words right out of my mouth. But some simple diamond studs would do nicely." Talita replied. Kay ended up taking a beautiful summery long dress, we said our goodbyes and walked out. "Say hi to Andrew for me." Kay said "Will do, and give Leda a kiss for me, tell her I'll come see her soon." I said and she chuckled, "She'll be waiting, she loves you and knows you always come bearing gifts." She said and I laughed. "I hope your kid comes soon so you can spoil him or her rotten for once. Me and Marti are tired of you." She teased and I made a face at her. We hugged and said goodbye before taking different routes home.

CHAPTER 4

Friday morning I walked into the Wright Inc. offices, flanked by my team. I had Patricia with me and three others. Curtis, 'the geek', absolute genius this guy. Marco, 'the problem solver', he's the epitome of outside the box thinking. Elena, 'jack of all traits' anything you want done; she's your girl. One of the two receptionist ladies directed us to the 16th floor conference room.

I was glad we've steered clear of the 24th floor, the executive floor, which meant like today I won't be bumping into Andrew. Besides he told me he's taking business to Randburg today, so he's not in today.

Last time I'd met with the project coordinator and manager but this time the CFO joined us as well.

After exchanging pleasantries, we began the meeting. They briefed us on how the take over was coming along, and any glitches they're coming across. My team and I had discussed most of them and had come up with ideas.

We outlined our final strategy on how to take down Pierce & Sons. They've been good in implementing our plans so far, but they only did that after extensive evaluation and critique. If they do this, I have no doubt they'll take them over. The meeting took about two hours before it concluded.

This deal is almost done so I doubt the possibility of my coming back here, well not under the capacity of Nixon Brooks.

They thanked us before I walked to the elevators with my team.

They were talking among themselves, mostly about the interior of this building, I agreed, it's nothing short of beautiful. The elevator pinged its arrival on the first floor and I froze when the doors opened to Andrew waiting, seeming deep in thought. He had his hand in the pocket of his dress pants, and his suit jacket was closed over the vest and brown tie.

I watched him slowly look up then flash me a gorgeous smile. My heart made an embarrassing lurch, damn. I noticed then that my team had gone silent since the doors opened and their awe was a palpable thing behind me. Unlike Patricia, the others were seeing the boss in person for the first time. I stepped out of the car and they followed.

I returned his smile, "Mr. Wright." I said, greeting him with my professional voice, "Always a pleasure." I added; extending my right hand he took it in his. The slight shiver I felt at his touch mocked our professional façade. "The pleasure is all mine," he said, and something in his eyes told me he felt it too. His gaze shifted to the group behind me, clearly telling them to get lost and they quickly left. "We'll be outside" Patricia said to me "Mr. Wright." She reverently greeted Andrew before she followed the others out.

If only the receptionists could leave too, I could feel they weren't even trying to hide the fact that they were openly staring. I shook my head slightly, "I didn't tell them to leave, yet you order them away with a mere look." I said and he shrugged. "Must be the boss thing." He said, "I'm their boss." I said, "And I'm *your* boss." He countered softly.

I took a deep breath; I wanted to wipe that arrogant smile off his sensuous lips, almost as much as I wanted to kiss him right then. "I trust working with my people has been pleasant?" he asked, "Very, they are a gifted bunch. They've made my work here, quite interesting." I said,

"We've laid out the final details, the take over should go forward as planned." I added, "Excellent. I appreciate your services Mrs. Wright." He said and that's when I noticed he was still holding my hand.

I snatched it away, "You paid good money for them." I said, then lamely glanced at my watch, "I must get going now, good day Mr. Wright." I added, and he stepped closer to me, like he can't help himself, damn it I know he can't. "Don't." I whispered. "Sorry baby girl." He murmured, his apology genuine, and his endearment was nearly my undoing. I stepped back, flashing him a parting smile before I walked away. The receptionists pretended to do work when I glanced in their direction; we certainly gave them something to talk about for the day.

Dean's dinner party was held at The Maslow hotel in Sandton. The ballroom rented out for the gathering was nothing short of luxurious. I could tell everyone in the firm was present, from directors, shareholders to the everyday employees. We caught up to Dean and his wife Miranda, who greeted Andrew and I fervently. Dean and Andrew got into their male chatter and he kissed my forehead before he walked away with Dean to meet someone.

Miranda pulled me aside, grabbing champagne glasses for us when a waiter passed.

"You look absolutely beautiful tonight." She said, "So do you Miranda." I said, accepting a glass from her. "Thank you dear." She said, "How are the kids?" I asked and she chuckled, "Troublesome, especially the younger two." She said and I chuckled. "How about you, any kids in the near future?" she asked and I looked to where Andrew was standing with Dean and some other man.

"Hopefully." I said, "Ah, you're trying." She said and my gaze snapped to her, wondering how she could tell. She shrugged understanding my silent question, "Out of personal experience you just start to know these things." She said, "He's making waves at Wright Inc., everyone in the corporate world is taking notice. I hope God blesses you with many." She said and I smiled at her. "Andrew needs an heir, multiple heirs." She said.

I know Andrew wants a big family, which might have something to do with him being the only child, and his father's absenteeism from his life since his mother died when he was boy. I want more than anything to give him his big family but right now I can only contemplate having four kids, maximum. "You make a lovely couple Zoe, the little ones will be beautiful." She said, "Thank you Miranda." I said and the conversation turned to general topics.

Andrew came back to me and we were practically stopped by almost everyone. The dinner was delicious and the dancing took place there after. Andrew and I slipped out to the back balcony when no one seemed to notice us. Thankfully there was no one back here. Yet. "I didn't know you knew so many people." I teased, staring at the Sandton skyline. "I don't." he said and I chuckled, he turned to face me, "You look lovely tonight." He said, caressing my cheek and I smiled. "You said that already." I pointed out, even though I didn't mind he kept repeating it.

"Did I? I don't recall." He said, and then leaned down to kiss me. I welcomed it, kissing him back. My arms went around his neck when he deepened the kiss, his hands contracting almost painfully on my waist. I gasped a little, letting his probing tongue into the deep recesses of my

mouth. You'd think years of kissing this man I'd somehow learn to kiss him and breathe at the same time.

My hands went into his hair as he started doing all sorts of sinful things with his mouth. I'm sure now we were way passed what is considered acceptable PDA, even though there was no one else here, anyone can appear. I wrenched my mouth free, "Andrew." I breathed in warning, and his response was a groan, a very frustrated one.

He kissed my neck instead "You're giving me blue balls baby girl." He said against me. "Serves you right for undermining my authority in front of my team." I said, "Please." He pleaded in that tone he knows I can't say no to. His hand made a dangerous trail down the side of my body to cup my ass, pulling me against him and his clear erection. "Okay stop." I whispered, "When we get home I'll let you have your wicked way with me," I added and he pulled away.

"We won't be able to leave this dinner for another couple of hours." He said, his hazel gaze dark with blatant desire. "I can't wait that long." He added. Before I could even respond he pulled me back into the ballroom and downturned into some passageway. No one seemed to see us, except Miranda who raised her flute in my direction and I felt heat rush up my neck.

"Andrew where are we going?" I asked and he didn't answer me as he turned a corner then opened the first door there. It was an empty small lounge room. He gestured for me to go in, in all honesty Andrew and I have made love in all sorts of places but still. "This is not a good idea. Everyone will notice we're gone..." I murmured; I turned only to be silenced by his lips. "Let them." He said, nibbling at my lower nip, drawing and sucking on it.

"We're married, what we do on our private time is none of their concern." He said, kissing me harder and I succumbed, oh don't I always? I took off his jacket and I started at his shirt when he stopped me. "No time for that baby girl." He said, picking me up, "Right now I need to be inside you." He added. He carried me to one of the couches before he dropped to his knees in front of me. He kissed down my neck and shoulder.

He slipped the neckline of my dress down to expose my breasts to him, my nipples hard and aching. He teased them, kneading them while his mouth devoured mine. I moaned when he took one into his warm mouth, "Please tell me the door is locked at least." I managed to mewl, "It's locked." He murmured, giving the other equal attention.

I wanted him so much it was a fever in my blood, tension and lust coiled tight inside me that I think I'd split in half if he stopped touching me. My dress had managed to ride up my thighs, and he pulled it up and over my hips completely. He swiftly removed my lacy underwear and drew my legs apart.

I squirmed when his fingers went into my drenched folds, "Damn Zoe." He groaned, he lifted my legs up on his shoulders and his head dipped. I cried out when his tongue met my needy flesh. Andrew's oral prowess never fails to take my breath away, my God, here! I can still hear the party going strong out there. I lied back on the couch and moaned when he slipped a finger into me, continuing his treatment on my clit then another.

I was so close I could feel it and so could he as drew me closer to the edge. "Come on Zoe." He whispered harshly and I came apart with a hoarse cry. He was above me poised at my entrance by the time I came down from my high and I wanted nothing more than to feel him

inside me, "Please." Now I pleaded. He didn't hesitate as he slowly entered me, burying himself to the hilt. "God, you feel so good." He groaned, moving in and out at a measured pace.

My hips lifted slightly, meeting his thrusts, as they grew more vigorous. He grabbed the back of my thigh, urging me wider as he began to pound into me. I felt another orgasm building quickly. He kissed me, drinking in my moans, then I was flying again and I pulled away from him and cried out. I didn't get a chance to recover from this one when he pulled me on top of him.

He got a firm hold on my hips and impaled me on him. He set a deliciously brutal pace; I could do nothing but hang on for the ride. Only Andrew can completely dominate me in a position that favors the one on top. I was pretty sure if someone stood close enough outside they could hear us and I didn't even care. He buried his head in my neck as he came; my own orgasm took me by surprise then.

We stayed still for a good few minutes, trying to catch our breaths; we looked into each other's eyes and chuckled. "I can't move." I said and Andrew helped me up. We helped each other fix our appearance; thankfully there was a sizable round mirror close to a drawer. I sighed as I looked at myself; I always look like this. Wide bright eyes, lips plump and pinker than usual and because I was light skinned I got this weird looking flush. This is happening for the umpteenth time damn it, I replied my lip-gloss.

Andrew came up behind me, I looked at him through the mirror, and he looked absolutely normal. I pouted, "I feel like a I have 'I just had mind blowing sex' written on forehead." I muttered and he chuckled hugging me from behind. "You're being paranoid." He said and I huffed, "Easy for you to say." I said turning to sweep his hair back in place. He fixed the hem of my skirt and I smiled at him; I grabbed my clutch and went for the door. I froze when it simply opened by itself.

I slowly turned to shoot Andrew a death glare, "It wasn't locked!" I hissed at him. Shock was nowhere in his expression, "I thought for sure I locked it." He said, "Bullshit, don't lie to me." I raged; I know him, he's not so mistake prone. "You didn't lock it at all, did you?" I asked and he breathed out. "No." he admitted. I hated these moments. When I'm so angry I can't do anything but glare daggers at him.

I yanked the door open and walked out.

CHAPTER 5

"Hold on." He tried to grab my arm but I twisted out of his hold, still too angry to speak. We'd just made it back into the ballroom when he spun me into his arms and we blended in with the dancing crowd. He knew I wouldn't cause a scene here. Due to his administration we glided with ease along the dance floor despite the tension between us. "You weren't really planning on avoiding me, were you Mrs. Wright?" He whispered and I kept my angry silence.

He sighed, resting his cheek against my head, his right hand at the small of my back still guiding me through the slow dance, while his left softly caressed my cheek. Apology clear in the touch. Words hardly evaded Andrew, but he could communicate just as much with a mere touch. I could feel my anger slipping away and I desperately clung to it. If anyone happened to be watching us, they would never guess we're having a spat.

"You just had three orgasms, you can't really be angry with me," He murmured into my ear and I gasped, shocked he'd dare say that aloud. "Screw you." I whispered, but there was no bite in it. "I believe you just did that." He replied and I couldn't suppress the chuckle that escaped me. "Do you have an exhibitionist streak I don't know about honey?" I asked, sarcasm clear in my tone. "Not that I'm aware of baby girl." He said, not returning it.

"Okay would it help if I told you that you make me mindless with lust and I cant think about anything but making hot passionate love to you?" he said and I scowled at him. "That's not funny." I said, "I'm not trying to be." He said soberly and I sighed.

"Forgive me?" He pleaded softly and I looked away from his gorgeous eyes, "You drive me crazy, you know that?" I asked and he rested my head against his broad shoulder. "I know." He said more solemnly than I expected. And wasn't that the honest truth? We drove each other crazy, in every good and bad way. "But you love me anyway." He added, "Too much." I whispered, then we both paused "Otherwise I would've thrown you out the window a long time ago." I added and I felt his chest shake with laughter.

* * *

I treated Patricia to lunch, girl has been working hard and that's a lot coming from me, she deserved it. I was warming up to her the more we worked together, and the more I got to know her. I asked for the bill when she suddenly stopped talking, I was amazed at how much the kid will talk given the chance. I looked at her and saw her gaze trained behind me.

She looked at me as if contemplating whether to say something "Is that Mr. Wright?" she asked and I stiffened involuntarily and turned to follow her gaze. And sure enough it was him; although he was facing away from me I would never in a million years mistake his height, build and hair, or that suit. I once told him it was my favorite.

Then I understood Patricia's initial doubt, it wasn't seeing him here, it was his lunch buddy. The woman could be dead on his age, or maybe a year younger. Dark hair, very beautiful from where I was sitting. Stylish and statuesque, to cap it all off I knew this wasn't a business meeting. It seemed too personal, too intimate; or rather from the way the woman was regarding Andrew. They knew each other from somewhere. I would say they're very close friends but I know all of Andrew's close friends, even female ones.

She I've never seen or heard about ever. I schooled my features as I turned back around and paid the bill, I breathed deep, no need to get worked up over nothing. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything." Patricia said, surprising me. This girl sees more than she lets up, and she's getting good at reading me. "Nonsense." I said. While I waited for the waiter to bring back my credit card I began chanting to myself; 'don't go over there', 'just leave without him seeing you', 'it doesn't matter who she is'.

The waiter came back and we stood, and like I'd done nothing at all, I made a beeline straight for their table, Patricia in tow. I fixed my smile into place when they both looked up, both of them surprised. "I saw you just as we were about to leave and I thought I'd stop by and say hi." I said to Andrew and he stood up. "Seeing you is always a sweet surprise my love." He said, giving me a chaste kiss. "Hello Patricia." He added to the girl behind me, who just stared at him as if in shock.

Andrew introduced us; the woman was Dena, an old friend of his. Dena and I shook hands and exchanged awkward smiles.

"Andrew was just telling me about you." She said to me, and I turned my gaze on Andrew. From where I was sitting it didn't look like they were talking about the wife. "Was he?" I said, and he stared back at me. Of course he saw what was happening inside me, he always did, and the look in his eyes clearly urged me not to jump into conclusions. *I can't help it* I thought helplessly. Dena must've noticed our silent conversation because suddenly she felt the need to explain.

"I just got in town and Andrew owes me lunch for all time sake, I gave him no choice." She said jokingly and I tore my gaze from Andrew and I shot her the most genuine smile I could muster. "Well I must get back to the office. It was nice meeting you Dena." I said and she nodded, "I'll see you later." I said to Andrew and squeezed his arm then walked away.

Why did I have to do that? Why couldn't I just leave? Did I just squeeze his arm? It was such a dispassionate gesture and it revealed so much about how I felt instead of concealing it. I wanted to cry out in frustration at the feeling of being exposed. Patricia and I got into my car and I searched for my keys in my bag. I could feel Patricia wanted to say something. "How does Mr. Wright know my name?" she asked, clearly baffled by that.

I spared her a look, "Of course he knows your name, you're my intern." I said with more bite than I intended. I finally found my keys; I slotted them in and pushed the start button. There was a tentative pause "For the record, I don't think you have to worry about that woman. I see the way Mr. Wright looks at you, he's madly in love with you." She said and I paused then looked at her for a short while. I flashed her a small smile, "You see more than you let on, don't you?" I said and she shrugged.

I sighed inwardly, looking towards the restaurant then back at her, "Word of advice kid. Don't for the life of you marry a man who makes you lose those precious wits of yours, because of something as stupid as lunch with an old friend." I said, almost bitterly. The bitterness aimed at myself, than anyone else. "You are never to mention this again, even to me, or you're gone. You understand?" I asked and she quickly nodded and I sped off the curb.

I got back to my office and immersed myself in work. Thirty minutes later someone just burst into my office and I was shocked to look up and see Andrew shut the door behind him. I stood up when he walked towards me. Either he and Dena were at the restaurant longer than

I thought or he cut their lunch short. "Andrew," I said before he cupped my face in his hands and he kissed me hard, and thoroughly.

I was slightly dazed and breathless when he pulled back, "A squeezing of the arm? That's no way to say goodbye to your husband." He said, "I know I just..." "Shh." He pressed his thumb to my lips. He stepped away from me a little and looked out my tall windows. "That woman you saw me with is exactly what I said she is, an old friend." He said, "Her name is Dena Murren." He said and I froze, recognizing the last name.

"Murren? As in Johan Murren, the man who started the company with your father?" I asked, reeling a little. "Yes, she's his first born." He added. "I'll explain everything at home, right now I have to get back to work." He said and I looked down, feeling awful. "I'm sorry." I said, then shook my head bitterly, "You know I saw you with her and I had every intention of walking away, neither of you would've known I was even there. But I'm stupid and impulsive when it comes to you." I said, and saying that left a bitter taste in my mouth but it had to be said; I had no right to assume the worst.

Andrew's brows furrowed as he watched me, his gaze roaming greedily, almost desperately on my features. Suddenly Patricia's voice popped into my head *I see the way Mr. Wright looks at you, he's madly in love with you*. Andrew walked over to me again and cupped my face, "I wish I could say you look cute when you're jealous, but seeing the way it hurts you and the way you hate it..." he trailed off. "I have to go." He said, "Are you okay?" he asked and I nodded. He placed a tender kiss to my forehead and walked out. I leaned heavily back on my desk wiping away the single tear that managed to escape then.

CHAPTER 6

Andrew and I sat on the couch facing each other, while we ate. "After I was told the Murrens moved away I still saw Dena at school but she avoided me, I didn't understand why, I don't think did she at the time either." He said, "So eventually we drifted apart." He added and my brows furrowed. I could see that her friendship meant a great deal to Andrew.

"Last time I saw her was in high school, it wasn't the best of farewells either. I'm guessing she found out or was told about what my father did, because she kept yelling that my family were a bunch of liars and traitors and that I wasn't any different." He said, seeming deep in thought. "She hasn't tried to contact me until today." He added.

"She didn't look all that angry at you today." I said, quite the opposite. She looked like she was happy just to be sitting across Andrew. That's what sent off the alarm bells, how she reacted to him. "She found out that I knew nothing about what my father did, and maybe she decided not to hold my father's actions against me." He said, "That's good." I said, so she's willing to bury the hatchet. Does she want to be a part of Andrew's life again, is that why she's back?

"But that's not it," He said, almost as if he read my thoughts.

"She wants a piece of Wright Inc.," he said and my eyebrows shot up, that I didn't see coming. "It's not much considering what my father stole from her father and indirectly from her as well." He said. "And what happens if you refuse?" I asked, "She threatened to go public with the truth." He said and yet another shock to me, "She'd do that?" I asked.

"I've known Dena a long time and although she claims she no longer hovers any resentment towards me. She doesn't bluff." He said. "I more than anyone wants my father to pay for what he did, but if this got out in public, the damage will be irrevocable. It will affect a lot of innocent people. Because of what my father did, it will also hurt the next Wright generation." He added, "It's a vicious cycle I see no end to." He said.

I paused a little, "You sound decided." I said, "I am, I'm going to give her what she wants. In turn she promised me she and her family will sign a non-disclosure agreement. And hopefully we can put this behind us." He added.

He looked up at me, "I want to give her a piece of Wright Inc. not because of her threat or some sort of compensation but because it's the right thing to do." He said, "I promised that I'd turn things around when I took over from my father, that I'd try to right some wrongs and this is the biggest wrong." He said, "I've been given a chance to set it right and I'm going to take it." He added.

I smiled at him nodding, thinking to myself, I'm very lucky. I've landed myself a good man; those are hard to come by these days. I scooted closer to him and he took me into his arms "I love you." I said, "Do what you have to, I completely support you." I said. "That's all I need baby girl." He whispered then kissed me.

I woke up before five am, a little early for my standards. I knew I couldn't go back to sleep so I got off the bed, careful not to wake Andrew up. I grabbed his shirt off the chair by the headboard and wore it over my naked body. I quietly padded out of the bedroom and went

downstairs. I walked over to the tall glass walls of the living room and looked out at the morning sky. The promise of dawn creating a lovely shade of light orange.

I glanced to my left and slightly smiled at the white grand piano there. Its beauty is breathtaking, just like the man who gave it to me. During my varsity years I decided to learn the piano and I grew to love playing more than I thought I would. Just like that, because I loved to do it when I found the time, he bought a white grand piano and gave it to me as a wedding gift.

I walked over to it, running my hand over the shiny smooth white hardwood. I sat down on the bench and tested the keys. Still so impeccably tuned. I started to play a soft, simple melody. My mind wandered back to my dream, I can't remember the last time I wanted a dream to be real this badly. It was of Andrew and I and we were getting our first ultrasound done. I paused playing when my left hand fell to my flat stomach; it felt so real. I shook my head and resumed playing.

Andrew and I have been trying for a few months now and I'm still not pregnant. *Andrew needs an heir, multiple heirs.* I flinched as I remembered Miranda's words. What if I can't get pregnant at all? What if I can never have Andrew's babies? My fingers paused on the keys as a rush of pain tore through my chest. I took a deep breath and resumed playing, the corners of my lips lifted bitterly. At first I was apprehensive about motherhood but now that I want it. Want it with every fiber of my being, it's not happening.

I stopped playing when I felt watched. I looked up and Andrew was leaning against a pillar; I didn't hear him come down or know how long he'd been standing there, watching me. He looked incredible even with sleep-mussed hair and in nothing but his pajama pants. He walked over to me "Don't stop playing." He said and I gave him a small smile. "Did I wake you? I didn't think you could hear it from upstairs." I said when he sat on the bench with me. He just shook his head, clearly wanting me to continue playing so I obliged him.

He rested his chin on my shoulder, "Are you okay?" he asked and the tenderness in his voice caused a lump to form in my throat. "I'm fine." I said automatically.

"Don't lie to me." He said softly and I sighed pausing, "I'm not getting pregnant, we've been trying for a couple of months now." I said, my voice betraying me on how much that bothers me. Andrew paused, "Have faith and be patient, it'll happen." He said, he sounded so sure and I wished I could believe him but I had a bad feeling about this.

'And if it doesn't happen?' I wanted to ask, 'what if I can't give you the big family you want Andrew?' I stifled the hysteria I could feel bubbling up. I focused on playing and the melody was soothing. He kissed my shoulder "I love you, you know that right?" he said and I smiled at him and nodded. He kissed my cheek and stood up. "I'm going to take a shower. Join me." He said and I glanced at the closest clock, I didn't notice it was already six am. "You go ahead, I'll just be a minute." I said and his eyes narrowed a little but he walked back upstairs.

I walked into my office to see Patricia waiting for me as usual with my day planner. "Mr. Brooks asked to see you." She said and nodded, putting my Hermes handbag and laptop bag down. "Set up my teleconference with Mr. Arno" I said to her over my shoulder as I walked out. I made way for the boss's office, which was only a floor above mine.

I softly knocked and came in when I heard the response. He pleasantly smiled at me; Mr. Brooks is a businessman so he could be cutthroat and ruthless as the rest of them. But he made a pretty convincing good guy while he's at it; somehow I find that more dangerous, a predator luring you into a false sense of security, before going in for the kill.

"Please sit." He said and I did, "I didn't get to properly congratulate you on a job well done with helping Wright Incorporated clinch Pierce & Sons a few months ago." He said and I nodded "I understand you were out of the country sir." I said and he nodded. "But having come back and received feedback, they're impressed and so am I." he added, "Thank you sir." I said and somehow I had a feeling he didn't just call me in here to sing my praises.

"And because they were so impressed, they've decided to become an official client of Nixon Brooks." He said and I stiffened. "Of course you know what that entails." He added. Didn't I just? If Wright Inc. is a permanent client of this firm that means we are at their disposal whenever they may need us. When they call, we come running. / come running. For a hefty price of course, Nixon Brooks assurance doesn't come cheap but still. Damn it I'm going to kill Andrew, like the first time he forced me to work on the Pierce & Sons takeover, he let my boss be the one to break the news to me.

"I called you in here to make sure you're fine with that." He said, "With all due respect sir, would it matter if I wasn't?" I said and he gave me a small smile, appreciative of my cutting through the bull. "No not really. Listen to me Zoe; I've stressed the importance of your husband's company choosing this firm. Having Wright Inc. on our and *your* resume, wont hurt." He said and I froze. "My resume?" I asked, sure his choice of words was deliberate.

"That's another thing I wanted to make you aware of, you'll be the one overseeing all matters Wright Inc." He said and I had to stop myself from laughing out loud. I should've seen that coming, Andrew is my husband of course; he doesn't leave anything to chance. He had to have made that a condition. "That was non negotiable I'm guessing." I said. Ignoring my little comment "I agreed. You've shown you're more than capable, and all senior actuaries oversee one or two clients. You are yet to oversee a major client, I saw no harm in agreeing to their terms." He said.

I wanted to throw my arms up, wasn't there some kind of law against this? Something? Anything? This is a joke and yet nobody's laughing especially the boss. "I'll oversee Wright Inc. sir." I said, as we've already established that my feelings and opinions don't mean jack. "That's what I want to hear." Mr. Brooks grinned, "That's all for now." He said and I stood up and walked out. I paused after shutting the door behind me. For once I wanted to take off my Christian Louboutin shoe and haul it at something. Another part of me wanted to laugh, hard. Well what do you know? My husband becomes my first major client.

How is it that he's my first everything, quite literally? I shook my head and walked back to my office.

CHAPTER 7

As time went on I realized that I was right about Dena, yes she wanted a piece of Wright Inc. but it seemed that's insignificant in the wake of something she wanted most. And suddenly it was absolutely clear; she's in love with Andrew. Call it jealousy, call it what you want but I know what being in love Andrew looks like, aren't I the shining example? Now I get to watch her worm her way back into his life.

I couldn't do anything about it and I didn't want to, seeing how happy Andrew is having his childhood friend in his life again. Our trip to Durban for Maddy's wedding was good for me. It was a getaway, from Dena, from the disappointment I felt every time my period showed up. Andrew and I saw my doctor last month and he gave me a full bill of health, saw nothing wrong with me conceiving. Even his assurance wasn't enough to put me at ease.

I sat on my desk doing some work and I felt a little better having come back from the coast. My gaze snapped up when Patricia came in to consult on a problem she couldn't figure out. "Sorry for disturbing you, I can come back another time." She said and I shook my head. "Nonsense, let me see it," I said and she handed it to me and I looked it over.

Her calculations were correct but she got stuck, I bit my lower lip thinking. For some odd reason I started counting back and that's when it hit me. My heart lurched up my throat and I completely froze. I started counting back again. I was late on my period; I did it again. Yes, three days late to be precise. "Mrs. Wright?" Patricia asked; her brows furrowed in concern.

"Uh yes, I'm fine. Leave it with me, I'll go over it again and let you know what I find." I said and she nodded then hesitantly walked out of my office. I shot to my feet and started pacing, was it possible that I could be...? I started counting back again; I tried to do it slower this time. No, I'm not wrong; I am three days late. I immediately reached for my phone and called Kay. "Hey you..."

"I'm three days late on my period." I quickly said and Kay paused a minute. "Oh my God, are you sure?" she asked, "Yes I'm sure, I counted back like a dozen times already, I'm still doing it now." I said, "I'm in my office and I'm freaking out, I don't know what to do." I said. "Test it silly, most likely you're pregnant." She said excitedly and I smiled, "Okay. I'll talk to you later." I said. Try as I might to get back to work but it was futile so I decided to knock off early.

I couldn't barge into Dr. Colleen's office without an appointment and demand she run a pregnancy test on me so the best alternative was to test it myself. I went to buy a home pregnancy test; I bought the most expensive one they had on the shelves. It was getting dark out and Andrew would be home soon. I wanted to know, be sure before I told him anything. I don't know how much longer I spent urging myself not to be a coward and do the test.

When it came back negative I could swear I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces. My period was late, that didn't necessarily mean I'm pregnant. How had I managed to convince myself that I was? Stress, anxiety, and emotional strain could've been the cause, oh and I had those three in bucket loads lately. I walked out of the bathroom, breathing deeply; I could feel the hysteria I've been stifling for the past year bubbling up, threatening to choke me.

Furious at the wretched pregnancy test, at myself, at the whole bloody universe; I threw the damn box against the wall, faintly screaming while I'm at it. My hands went into my short hair and I felt like pulling it out. I paced, and I couldn't breathe, why couldn't I breathe?

Andrew came rushing into the bedroom, eyes wide, "Zoe, what's wrong?" he asked, and I wondered if I was having a nervous breakdown. Andrew quickly scanned the room when he saw the pretty pregnancy box on the floor his eyes closed for a second. He's a smart man; he can put two and two together. "Yeah, like you pretty much guessed, it's not positive." I said then continued to pace, still unable to get enough air into my lungs.

"Zoe..." He started softly "Three days, I'm three days late and then I thought surely I must be pregnant. I managed to get my hopes up over something that was probably caused by the build up to this." I waved a hand at my evident nervous breakdown. I fanned myself, but it was futile, I still wasn't getting enough air. "It's okay baby girl..."

"Stop saying that!" I yelled at him, "Its not okay, none of this is okay!" I added and he continued to watch me patiently. "I can't get pregnant Andrew." I said, my voice still way too high "Clearly something must be wrong with me." I added. "There's nothing wrong with you, your doctor confirmed that." Andrew said and I started pacing and breathing deeply again.

"Have you considered that maybe you're not the problem here?" he added and I looked at him, "What? And you are?" I asked skeptically. "Yes, maybe there's something wrong with *me*." He said. "Oh please." I said, and that seemed to have struck a chord. "Why? Because you can't fathom that there's anything wrong with me? I'm not perfect Zoe," he said, betraying his own hidden frustration at this and somehow it broke my heart even further.

"I never said you were perfect Andrew!" I snapped, "But lets be real here, if you slept with that Dena chick like she wants you to, you'd probably knock her up the first time." I spat and he paused, his eyes narrowing dangerously.

"I'm going to pretend I never heard that." He bit out, unable to take this any longer, I turned on my heel and I went into our bedroom balcony. A breeze washing over me was a welcomed thing in this December heat. Andrew didn't follow me into the balcony and when I heard the bedroom door close I assumed he left so I let the floodgates open. I cried, letting out all the pent up frustration and disappointment I've been keeping bottled up inside me. Feeling a little faint, I put my hands on the railing; painful sobs rocking my whole frame.

I felt Andrew's arms come around me and I stiffened, "Don't," he pleaded softly, "Let me hold you baby girl." He whispered his own voice anguished. I didn't fight him; I took my hands off the railing and held onto him instead. He didn't say anything else after that, he just held me as I cried.

CHAPTER 8

I listened to Andrew in the bathroom, in the closet, in the bedroom, all the while feigning sleep. He didn't bother to disturb me so I figured he wanted me right where I am. Last night was brutal to say the least, on both of us. I felt the bed dip beside me at his weight and I smelled his unmistakable scent. Suddenly I felt the lightest of touches on my cheek, I'm sure I shouldn't have felt had I not been awake. There was so much tenderness in the touch, so much love, my throat tightened with emotion.

He brushed a feather light kiss to my forehead then stood up. I heard the door click softly closed and I opened my eyes. A few tears escaped at the corners of my eyes because I know I'm hurting him. I sat up and started to formulate a plan, maybe if I went away, just for a few days he'll be better off. I sadly shook my head at myself; I've always thought myself to be a pretty levelheaded person. Emotion didn't overwhelm me, I didn't let it, but last night something snapped.

Andrew—my beloved husband—was my rock, my anchor but I saw what it did to him, seeing me that upset, it kills him.

The meltdown I had last night can never happen again. For his sake.

But where would I go? Where would he *let* me go? Was the real question.

I knew then, home, I could go home.

I got off the bed and showered, after dressing for work I texted Marti and she replied that she was planning to go home for the weekend. I lips curved up sardonically, now I know the universe really wants me to go. I texted her and asked if I could hitch a ride with her and she was more than happy to accept.

I walked out of my bedroom to find Ennis hard at work in the kitchen. She was surprised to see me come down. Thankfully no sign of Andrew; "Zoe, I was about to bring breakfast up for you. Mr. Wright told me you'd be staying in.," she said and I gave her a reassuring smile. "Oh he thought I was coming down with something, but I feel much better now." I said, "And I'll be taking some of this to go please Ennis, thank you." I said and she nodded after eyeing me hesitantly.

I arrived at the office and I went to Mr. Brooks' office and came in when he told me to. His surprise when he saw me was a palpable thing. "Zoe, this is a surprise." He said and my brows furrowed in confusion. "Your husband called in for you and said you weren't going to be in today. Are you alright?" he asked and I breathed out, Andrew is nothing if not thorough.

"Actually Mr. Brooks that's why I'm here." I said, "I know my holiday leave doesn't start for another week but I wanted to ask to take it a week early. You can take a week off next year or something." I said and Mr. Brooks scrutinized me for a while and I was suddenly nervous he saw too much.

"Sure take it and go relax, you're one of the hardest working people at this firm, you deserve it." He said, "Besides I doubt things will collapse for a week in your absence." He added and I shot him a grateful smile.

"Thank you Mr. Brooks." I said and he nodded, "Happy holidays to you Zoe." He said, "Happy holidays to you too sir." I said then walked out of his office; the universe speaks again.

I texted Marti that we're on for today and asked what time she was planning to leave and she replied by saying she'd get off work early and maybe leave around four pm later today.

I walked into my own office and before I could do anything else, I picked up the problem Patricia gave me yesterday. I worked on it for about fifteen minutes and I had figured it out. I walked out of my office towards her cubicle; she was also surprised to see me. So that's why I didn't find her in my office when I got there. "Mrs. Wright, I'm sorry I was told you weren't coming in today," she said "Don't worry, I'm not staying long. I've worked out your little problem." I said, and then I explained it to her step by step and showed her where she went wrong and how she can go about such a situation in future. "Thank you, it was giving me a headache." She said and I smiled at her. "It would've taken me less time but I'm a bit rusty, I haven't seen something of that sort since my first-second year after graduation." I said, "Then maybe that's why they give us interns, to keep us old crocs on our toes." I added and she chuckled.

"You're not old." She pointed out, "Good answer." I chuckled.

"Just keep at it, it'll make sense someday." I said and she nodded I was about to walk away when she called me. "Are you alright? It's just that yesterday you seemed a bit off." She asked and I swallowed. "I'm fine." I said, "Oh that reminds me, I'm taking my holiday leave a week earlier, so I'll see you next year." I said and after the initial shock she smiled and nodded. "Enjoy your holidays Mrs. Wright." She said, "You too kid." I said.

I packed all I needed to pack in my office and I closed it. Now what was left was telling my husband, something told me that won't do down as well as everything else. I could just wait to tell him at home, Andrew only spends half the day at the office on a Friday. But I couldn't do it in such an intimate setting; I needed mutual territory and his office is certainly better than at home. I drove to the Wright Inc. offices, I think this is the first time I'm entering these offices as just merely the boss's wife. Somehow that made me feel more raw.

I got off the executive floor and walked to his office and his secretary wasn't at her desk so I went ahead and knocked. I heard his voice call for me to enter and I took a deep breath before I did. Andrew looked surprised when I walked in. That's when I noticed Dena sitting in one of the visitor chairs opposite him. Andrew stood up and Dena turned to look at me.

Before anyone could say or do anything, Andrew's telephone rang and I could almost hear him curse the thing inwardly. "Yes." He answered, never taking his eyes off me. I watched his eyes narrow as he listened, "Very well, I'll be there shortly." He said then walked over to me. "Are you okay?" he asked softly and I nodded, "I'll just be a few minutes, wait here." He said, as if I'd go anywhere. He then scurried out his office.

I guess I should've felt some pleasure that he seemed to forget Dena existed for a moment there. But surprisingly I didn't. I looked back at Dena, although I didn't feel any pleasure, I was still feeling too raw and I didn't expect to be dealing with her today. So if I'm going to be in the same room with her, I needed to sit from a position of strength and there was no better position of strength than Andrew's throne-like armchair. Dena's gaze narrowed slightly when I made myself comfortable there.

"I must say. That chair is very fitting of you. Considering the amount of power you have over the man who sits there." Dena said, "You walk in and he forgets I'm here." She added

clearly not hiding the fact that it bothers her. I respected her for at least not trying to play me for a fool.

"I don't control nor do I manipulate Andrew, if that's what you mean." I said, "As for the other part, I wouldn't be too hard on yourself. *I am* the wife after all." I said with a shrug and she smiled blankly. "Of course." She agreed. "And I must say you're rather transparent. I don't know if I should respect that or not." I said and she smiled, "I'm assuming you have a point?" she asked.

"Yes, Andrew told me what you'd do if he didn't give you a piece of his company. I asked him if you'd actually do it and he said 'Dena doesn't bluff.'" I said, "But he was wrong, you were bluffing, you were never going to spill his father's secrets." I said, "You sound sure." She said, "I 'am. Identifying, calculating and eliminating risk is what I do for a living. But there's no risk here. Not where you're concerned. You want to know how I'm sure? Because you're in love with him." I said and that didn't surprise her. No one present in this room right now was.

"He's gone now, so we be real with each other here, woman to woman." I said and she leaned in. "You want to get real Mrs. Wright? Sure I can do that." She said, adding a biting edge to her voice when she said my title. "But do you really want us to have a friendly chitchat about our mutual love for the same man?"

CHAPTER 9

I stifled a flinch and kept silent. "I didn't think so." She said, "Because you see, you're transparent too." She added. "You're the jealous type, I picked up on it first time I met you. And the way Andrew hurried after you made me want to gag. But some guys do like that sort thing." She said with a shrug, "The needy girls, makes them feel like a man." She added and I couldn't stifle a flinch this time, she was hitting the chink in my armor.

"But I know Andrew, he's not like those brainless fools, so I don't get how you're still here, let alone married to him." She said. "Yes, I've been in love with Andrew since I was old enough to know what that is. And I'm not going to apologize for it." She added. "I don't expect you to. But what I want to understand is what are you looking to get out of this? Because this is all you're going to get, friendship." I said.

"If there was any chance for something more between you two, that ship sailed long ago even if I wasn't in the picture." I added and her eyes narrowed.

"And since we're keeping it real, yes I am the jealous type, but our years together has taught me to trust him implicitly. So if you're looking to try something in future, good luck to you, really." I said.

"Oh and between you and me, I also don't get how I'm still here, let alone married to him still. But I am, so you have to question if you're willing so suck that up and live with it." I added

"You see, you love him and because of that you won't spill his father's secrets because it will destroy him too." I said, "I also love him, hence I will do nothing about the friend that is hovering secret feelings and fantasies about him because he's happy he has his old buddy back. And because he's happy, I will suck it up." I added

"But don't you ever compare yourself to me, you can't even begin to understand how I feel about him, or what we have." I said then we stared at each other for a long while. I looked up when the door opened and Andrew walked in. He surveyed the mood a little and Dena was the first to smile. "Zoe and I were getting to know each other better." She said then stood up, "I have to get going." She said, "Yeah, I'll talk to you soon." Andrew said to her before turning his gaze back to me. The door clicked closed and we simply stared at each other for a moment.

I made a move to stand up, "Sit." He ordered and I stayed put. Only Andrew can reduce the throne-like armchair, my position of strength to nothing. He leaned against his desk, his gaze roaming over me "You went to work." He said and it wasn't a question. "Yeah, but didn't get any actual work done, I mainly just went over there to ask Brooks a favor and to clear out my office." I said, "I asked him to take my leave a week early and he agreed." I added and Andrew paused a little.

"That's good, you need the break." He said and I took a deep breath and decided to go for broke.

"I asked for the week early because I want to go home Andrew." I said and I watched him tense. "Why does that sound like you have no intention of me tagging along?" He said and I looked down. "Marti's going to Marapong for the weekend, I thought I'd hitch a ride with her." I said. "And yet you took a whole week for it, which means that you're not planning to stay just the weekend, are you?" he asked.

The more he probed the more on edge he became, I became. "I just feel like spending time with my family now will do me a world of good." I said and he pushed off his desk and ran a hand through his hair before he faced me again. "Zoe, call or text Marti, tell her to go without you." He said calmly but the order was clear and I blanched.

"I'm going with her Andrew." I said stubbornly. "Like hell you are!" he said, "Don't make this about your family, this is about you, choosing to run away from me." He added.

We both paused "You're hurting, and I hate that I can't do anything about it." He said and I looked down "I know you think I don't understand but I do." He added more softly and I swallowed hard.

"Yes I'm hurting Andrew and in turn I'm hurting you, but I figured if I just go away for a little while, and deal with this, then I wont..." I trailed off "Its better this way." I added

"You want to know what really hurts me Zoe? What hurts and upsets me is when you cut me off at the knees like this!" He said, "You're not alone in this so stop acting like you are." He added. He paused then took my hand,

"Everything you feel, I feel too. So no Zoe, you're staying and we're dealing with this together." He said then he picked me up and sat on his armchair with me on his lap.

"Look at me Tumi." He said softly and I slowly looked into his hazel gaze. "I am your husband for God's sake. If you need someone to be there for you, I'm here. If you're too weak to hold on, let go, I'll catch you. If you're in pain don't bear it alone, share it with me," He said wiping away a pathetic tear that escaped.

"Why do you insist on doing it alone when you don't have to?" he asked.

"Because..." I swallowed, "I can't need you more than I already do." I added, "Baby girl, you can never need me too much, don't you know that?" he said kissing me tenderly and held me.

Our moment was interrupted by my phone ringing; I got off Andrew's lap and answered it, "Marti, hi." I said, "Hey girl, I wanted to know if I should pick you up or what?" she asked and I paused, and looked at Andrew who watched me pointedly.

I sighed inwardly, "There's a change of plan, so you're going to have to go without me," I said. "Oh okay, no problem." She replied. "Say hi to them for me, I'll call soon." I said. "Sure thing, take care." She said before she hung up. Andrew continued to watch me,

"Go home baby girl, *our* home, eat something then sleep, can you manage that for me?" he asked and I nodded. He stood up and kissed me, "I'll be there soon." He said then let me go and I walked out of his office.

* * *

I spent my week off embracing my lazy side, lately I felt like it didn't exist anymore. I did a little shopping, had a spa day and all other unproductive things I could think of. The flat screen was on but I was on the love seat, reading a magazine instead. Another lazy thing I did was not put on proper clothes, like now I only wore my underwear underneath the white dress shirt I stole from Andrew's closet. It was around five in the evening when he came home, I flashed him smile "Hey, how was your day?" I asked and he grinned, "It just got so much better right now." He said, his heated gaze roaming over my body. I grinned then raised one leg provocatively and undid two more buttons.

"I should've tried harder to make you a housewife." He said and I chuckled when he walked towards me, "Oh dinner is in the microwave." I said and he hauled me against him. "Forget dinner." He said then kissed me, hungrily and passionately. I got on top of him, kissing him back just as hard. He kissed my neck as I undid his tie and shirt. Andrew impatiently ripped his shirt off me, and then stroked my erect nipple while he took the other into his mouth.

It's the middle of December, so its pretty warm out but I shivered and threw my head back. "I agree; I should've been a housewife instead." I breathed, my hands going into his hair as he devoured me. "Sitting around all day waiting for my sexy husband to come make love to me, this is the life." I added and I heard Andrew chuckle and he gently bit down on me when he pulled away. He stood with me in his arms and took this to the bedroom.

CHAPTER 10

Andrew ravaged my mouth as he drove me closer and closer to what would be my fourth orgasm of the night. My nails sunk into his shoulders and upper back before he pinned my hands above my head. His head dipped and he blew onto my aching breasts. "You're so sensitive." He murmured. It didn't make sense to me either because my period ended days ago. But I was sensitive, everywhere, and it made me all that more responsive to him, as if I needed help in that department.

"Please." I gasped.

I hated and loved it when he restrained me like this; it means I take only what he gives me. "Shh." he used his one hand to hold my hands still and the other went to cup my ass, angling my hips in a way that had him trusting exactly where I needed him most. The pleasure was so acute I tightly shut my eyes at it, "Look at me Tumi." He grunted.

I forced them open and looked into his hazel eyes. The intimacy of him inside me, of looking into his eyes, it was all too much and I cried out my powerful release, Andrew followed me soon there after.

He let go of my hands and I placed one my forehead still gasping for air, "I'm addicted to your love making, I know now." I breathed, seriously, I'm sure drugs couldn't possibly give you this kind of high, my heart felt like its going to burst out of my chest.

"Don't worry, you'll have a life time supply." He said then moved and I thought he was pulling out but he slowly thrust back in again. I squirmed, once we really get into it, we couldn't get enough of each other. But I was pretty sure my body has taken all it can take now. But he continued his slow fucking, and I felt every delicious inch of him inside me to the small hairs on my arms, it was maddening. "I want you with a passion so fierce it's insane." He whispered as he kissed my neck.

He reached in between our bodies to stroke my engorged clit and my breath hitched, he kneaded it in line with his measured thrusts. I was almost afraid my body would snap if I let go, "Andrew." I moaned loudly, "I-I cant..." "Yes you can." He murmured and I came hard, he kissed me, drinking in my cries of pleasure.

I woke up in the middle of the night, alone under the sheets; the unruffled pillow beside let me know Andrew hasn't come to bed yet. I glance at the clock on my nightstand; it was just after midnight. I got up from bed and winced, a reminder of exactly what I was up to a few hours ago. I chuckled to myself, wrapping the sheet around me before going to find Andrew.

I decided to start in his home office and I was right, I heard his voice as I came closer. I figured he was talking to someone on the phone, but who would be calling him at this time of the night?

"It's more complicated than that Dena." I heard him say and felt my back stiffen. Of course it had to be Dena, what did she want calling him at this time of the night? Whatever the reason was, I had a feeling I wasn't going to like it. "I'll see what I can do." I heard him say before I appeared on the doorway. He was bare foot and bare-chested, his pajama pants were his only article of clothing. He cut their conversation short then hung up.

"I thought you were sleeping." He said and I walked towards him, "I was, you'd worn me out." I said, and he smiled. "Was that Dena? It sounded serious, is everything okay?" I asked, "Yeah, she's just going through some stuff with her family." He said, and I kind of felt that he was avoiding the subject, which plagued my curiosity. "What kind of stuff?" I asked, "The details aren't important." He said and my eyes narrowed.

"The details aren't important or they aren't important to *me*?" I probed and he gave me an exasperated look, "Zoe..." he started wearily and I shook my head. "Its okay, I get it." I said; why was I pestering him? It didn't really matter did it? "Do you really?" he asked.

"No I don't." I said honestly. "Whatever Dena told me was in confidence and I can't betray that confidence, it's not fair to her." He said and I paused then nodded, deciding to let it go. He pulled me into his arms; his hands bunching up the sheet around me. "Now I know you didn't come all the way here to pick a fight with me," He said, brushing his nose against mine and I couldn't help smiling.

"I came to take you to bed with me," I said and he smiled, and I squealed in surprise when he lifted me into his arms and walked out of his office. I watched as his expression grows more solemn, "What's wrong?" I asked him when he put me down on the bed. "I have to go to Kimberly." He said after a paused and I just stared at him. "Kimberly?" I repeated. "I have some business to take care of there." He said and felt my heart start to speed up. He was right in stopping me from going home with Marti, it wasn't my family I needed, it was him.

Now he was leaving, why did I find that a little terrifying?

If I was being completely honest, I didn't trust myself not to fall apart like I did. His brows furrowed as he sat on the edge of the bed, watching me, "Are you okay?" he asked, "When are you leaving?" I redirected. "In two days." He said. "I'll come with you." I suggested but the look on his face clearly said he didn't want me to.

"That's not a good idea baby girl." He said and I frowned, "Why not? What kind of business is that?" I asked. "Look I'll only be a few days, besides, Marti and your friends are here, I don't want to drag you somewhere you're going to be bored." He said, *I'll be with you, that's good enough* I thought helplessly. He made up his mind and he wasn't changing it. "If I asked you to stay, would you?" I said, that was unfair but I was desperate.

He looked down, "I'm hoping you don't." he said, "Is it that important?" I asked, "Unfortunately yes." He said and I nodded after a long pause. He cupped my cheek, "Okay?" he checked, *No* I thought but I still nodded.

I tried to watch TV and avoid the fact that Andrew was packing upstairs and leaving. I knew I was overeating, that I'll be fine and yet somehow I knew I wouldn't. I jumped a little when a phone rang and I realized Andrew had left his phone on the kitchen counter. I walked over to grab it and I wasn't surprised to see Dena's caller Id. I accepted, "Andrew, I'm ready, I'll meet up with you in Woodmead." She said, "Hello Dena, may I ask why you're meeting up with my husband?" I asked.

There was a slight pause. "Look I don't know what Andrew told you, but he agreed to go to Kimberly with me," She said and I felt the hairs on my back stand out. She waited on the other

line but I was rendered speechless. "I have to go, please give him the message." She said before she hung up.

Angry, oh I'll give him the message all right. I rushed upstairs and found his duffle bag open on the bed then he came out of the bathroom. He paused, possibly sensing my ire. "This is the business you just had to take care of? Dena?" I asked and he glanced at his phone in my hand then back at me. "Zoe, you don't understand." He started, "Of course I don't understand, because you've told me nothing!" I shouted.

"Why are you going to Kimberly with her? Why is it so important?" I asked, "Look its not my business to say." He said and I flinched back I felt like he just slapped me. "Bullshit, clearly whatever it is, its important to you which makes it your business. And in case you forgot, your business is my business too." I said and I felt like it was falling on deaf ears.

I watched him zip up his duffle bag and take his Rolex off the nightstand and put it on. Couldn't he see that he's breaking my heart? "You're seriously going to leave right now, and tell me nothing?" I said softly. He looked at me, "I'm asking you one more time to trust me." He said, "And I'm asking you to be honest with me, but that's not going to happen, is it?" I said. "I'm sorry baby girl, but I have to go." He said, and I could hear he genuinely meant it.

My anger spiked, "I swear to God Andrew if you walk out..." I trailed off at the look in his eyes, dangerous and dark. "Finish the sentence, if I walk out then what?" he asked, his voice terse and measured. "Don't ever threaten me with this—" he gestured between us, our marriage, our love "—that's the one thing I will not tolerate." He said.

"Trust me." He pleaded more softly. He grabbed his duffle bag and walked over to me. When he was getting too close I stretched out my arm to ward him off and he stopped. I held out his phone instead.

"Dena said she'll meet you in Woodmead." I said, looking down, I could hardly recognize my own voice, so blank and yet raw. I didn't want to cry in front of him but one stupid tear managed to escape. He took his phone, and I looked up to see him watching me with a desperate look in his eyes. He looked like there was so much he wanted to say, do but he still turned and walked out.

I just stood there until I heard his Maserati purr on the driveway and fade out. I sat on the bed and then allowed myself to cry.

I'm not sure how long I just sat there crying but I got up and it was clear, if I was going to survive these next couple of days in one peace, I couldn't stay in this house. I went to my closet; I didn't know how long I was going to be away so I took as much as I could.

All the while thinking of where I could go, I couldn't go home, I didn't want to have to explain why I'm so miserable.

I didn't want to impose on Kay or Marti either. And if I was honest with myself, I didn't want to go somewhere Andrew would find me when he did come back. I'm sure I wouldn't be ready to face him even then.

Eden Sun, the lodge owned by the Wright family south of Joburg. It was perfect, I'd still feel close to him, but unlike this house it wouldn't be overkill. And it is the last place Andrew would think to look for me. Suddenly I was thankful Ennis and Martin were on holiday, they'd make my getaway that much harder and I wouldn't trust them not to blab to Andrew.

I took my luggage downstairs and grabbed a piece of paper.

Don't freak out, I'm okay. I just can't be in this house, and I can't see you right now, please respect that.

Zoe.

I walked out of the house, after loading my luggage in the boot of my Mercedes and I climbed into the driver seat. I slipped on my Alexander McQueen sunglasses as the powerful car purred to life. I glanced at the beautiful house I've called home for the past five years. Andrew's going to be furious, but he did what he had to do today, whatever it is. I have to do the same. I drove out.

CHAPTER 11

Eden Sun Lodge is the epitome of luxury; of course, they catered to the upper crust of the Highveld. It is rated number three on the best lodges in the whole country but for me it holds some sentimental value as well. This is where I spent my first weekend with Andrew, and the first time he made love to me. I checked in at the desk, the staff was fussing over me, must have something to do with my last name and I hated that it drew attention from the other tenants.

What I wanted was to remain inconspicuous, hence I asked for their most secluded cottage. "Your car will be guarded twenty-four seven in the lodge parking and your luggage will be brought to you momentarily." The lady at the desk said. "Daisy here, will take you to your cottage." She added. "Thank you." I said, "If there's anything you need don't hesitate to ring the front desk Mrs. Wright." She went on and I gave her a smile.

Did they have to say Mrs. Wright every five seconds? I followed Daisy into the small golf cart. When we arrived I noted that we could've walked, the cottage wasn't that secluded. But it is a sizable distance away from the others. The cottage was bigger than I thought it would be with a separate bedroom, kitchen and living area. The indoor Jacuzzi was the one thing I was certainly going to enjoy. Daisy showed me around and how everything worked. Just then my luggage was brought in.

I was glad when they both left. First things first I decided to run myself a hot bath. I put my phone on silent but not before noticing I missed a call from Andrew, I had a feeling I'll be missing tons of those for the next couple of days. It was dark out so he would've landed in Kimberly hours ago. If he decided to drive there, it's a five-hour drive but this is Andrew and he took his Maserati, which means he would've made it three and a half hours depending on traffic, he would only be arriving there now.

I shook my head, I don't even know how he's travelling there, I don't know anything, and it's driving me crazy. Its funny how I keep thinking in the 'he' and not 'they'. I threw my phone onto the bed as I started to undress.

* * *

The last three days have been rough, I had all the luxury and comfort that would make most people happy but I was miserable. I missed Andrew too much, and I've been under the weather which was not helping at all. So I went to the nearest hospital and had some doctor check me out.

I toyed with the big diamond ring on my finger as I waited on the examination bed. The doctor and his assistant; came back in, the girl I figured just graduated from med school. "Mrs. Wight, it seems everything is okay, but you *are* pregnant." He said and I blinked at him. At first I thought I imagined him saying that, he must've noticed how perplexed I was.

"When I asked if you were pregnant, you sounded quite sure." He said, I remember giving a quick no when he asked if I was pregnant. "But those were symptoms of pregnancy, but to be sure we ran a test and I was right, you are pregnant. Two weeks along to be exact." He said and I was still in a state of shocked silence.

Of course he's right, those were symptoms of pregnancy, but I realized that I'd lost hope to the point where I didn't even recognize the obvious signs anymore. "Mrs. Wright?" The girl asked this time. I chuckled, which grew into full-blown laughter, to end up as tearless sobs. The two looked between each other, clearly baffled at my reaction.

I got a handle on myself, "Are you sure?" I asked the doctor and he smiled, "This is not a home pregnancy test Mrs. Wright, the tests we run here are ninety-nine point nine percent accurate so yes, I'm sure." He said. "I recommend you see a pregnancy specialist as you advance, get you on the right vitamins and diet." He added and I nodded.

"Thank you." I stood up and we shook hands. When I got back into my car, my hand hesitantly dropped to my stomach, it's real? I'm not dreaming am I? I pinched myself to make sure. My God, I rested my forehead on the leather steering wheel. *Oh Andrew, why aren't you here?* His hazel gaze would've lit up and he would've flashed me that gorgeous smile of his before he swung me into his arms completely elated.

Instead he's halfway across the country and I don't know why. Part of me resents him for choosing to leave me, even when he knew I wanted him to stay, needed him to stay. I didn't know when he's coming back or if he's back already. Either way I can't go back there now, this resentment and hurt is something I have to let go of first. Or else I'll just be nasty and spiteful for something I need to deal with on my own. And I hate it when I'm a total bitch to him.

I sighed then pulled out of the parking.

Dark clouds were gathering, I noticed, as the sun disappeared. I grabbed a bowl of ice cream out the freezer and I curled up on the sofa, turning on the flat screen and I indulged myself. I think its too early to get cravings so I guess I'm just comfort eating then. *I'm missing your daddy terribly and because of that, I'm not sleeping well*, I thought to the little tiny life growing inside me, *so I'm going to console us with this delicious treat*.

A knock came on the door and I thought it was the lodge staff so I yanked it open. You can imagine my surprise to find Andrew there instead, Andrew looking very hot and very bothered. My heart—that treacherous thing—cried out for him, despite it all. "How did you find me?" was all I could manage then. "Its very hard to disappear these days with GSP tracking, your car, your phone." He said. "I had to give Ronny the excuse you lost it," He muttered.

Ronny is Andrew's hacker and tech guy; he normally does everything he's told without question, but I guess he must've thought something's wrong if Andrew wants to track his wife's phone.

"I must say though without his tech, this is the last place I would've looked for you, or was that your plan all along?" he added, "That I don't find you?"

I dropped my gaze.

"I'm at a loss here Zoe, I come back home to find you and some of your things gone, and instead I find this stupid thing." He said, pulling out the note I left him. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked. I sighed, "Exactly what it says, and I still mean every word." I said and he shook his head, "And what did you suggest I do? Sit and wait for you to come back? *If you were coming back?*" he said.

"Aren't you going to invite me in?" he asked when I paused, "No." I said, "I can't deal with this right now, please leave." I said. "You and I both know what this really is, you're mad at me, and you're punishing me by pushing me away." He said tersely. I felt my own calmness slip away.

"You stopped me from going home, 'we'll deal with this together' you said," My voice thick with residual hurt. "You knew what I was going through, I was in a bad space and I needed you with me, you knew that but you still left." I murmured and he looked down for a second, "You chose to travel halfway across the country with another woman and not be bothered to at least tell me why." I swallowed, "So yes, I am mad at you." I added.

He breathed out in a rush "Zoe listen..." he started softly.

"I'm pregnant." I whispered, and he froze, when he continued to just stare at me I spoke, "I was feeling under the weather so I went to the doctor, he ran some tests and found that I'm pregnant." I said, "I'm two weeks along. There's nothing I wanted more in that moment than for you to have been there." I added then swallowed hard.

"I'm not punishing you, that's why I'm here. I don't want to fight you and I'm feeling too resentful not to do that." I said quietly, "So please leave." I added and Andrew continued to just silently stare at me. Nor did he do anything when I closed and locked the door on him.

CHAPTER 12

I leaned against the door and a long moment passed, I thought he'd really left but whatever trance he was in, he snapped out of it with a vengeance. "Zoe!" he banged on the door, "Open the damn door Zoe!" He called from the other side, his voice furious, determined and desperate all at once. "We're resolving this right now, hell claw my eyes out if it makes you feel better." I moved away from the door, scared I'll bend to his will and let him in.

"Zoe! I know I screwed up, but you're going to let me in, and you're going to let me explain," he said, he was almost shouting now and I felt the bang of the door resonate deep in my heart. "I know you can hear me Zoe, open the door!" he called out, "You're not doing this, I'm not letting you do this! Open the goddamn door!"

I sunk to the floor, fighting back tears and asking myself why couldn't I just open the door and haul myself into his arms, its what every part of my being wanted, needed.

"Tumi!" I wiped away the wetness on my cheeks then "We're married, we're having a baby, I'm not going anywhere so open this fucking door!"

There was a long quiet pause. "You're my whole world Tumi, you and our unborn baby." He said more quietly and my throat tightened unbearably. "So I'm not leaving here, until you let me inside." He added.

He can't be serious, can he? Its going to rain soon and sure enough about fifteen minutes later it started to rain. I looked out the window when it started pouring down hard.

His Maserati was still parked outside the cottage, I bit down on my lip, he must've gone somewhere else surely. But the nagging feeling wouldn't go away, I groaned and I opened the door to find him sitting beside it on the small porch, its roof wasn't made to hold off this kind of heavy rain so he was soaked anyway. "Andrew." I gasped, "Oh my God, what are you doing? Get up from there." I said and he looked up at me and stood up, he got inside and I shut the door behind him.

I just stared at him, soaking wet from head to toe, "Are you insane? Sitting in the rain like that?" I said, shocked he'd make good on this promise not to leave but this was extreme to say the least. I took off his jacket "You have to get out of these wet clothes." I said and he just watched me.

"You let me in," he said, as if he doubted I would and I stopped to meet his gaze, still perplexed. "Of course I let you in, I wasn't going to leave you in the rain." I said, having to stand on my tiptoes to lift his soaked shirt over his head. I stopped to stare at him, why is it that everything he does—even the crazy—tugs at my heart so painfully? "Oh Andrew." I sighed.

I walked to the bathroom and started the shower running, and I was glad to see a nice long puffy bathrobe. That will do until this violent rain stops. I walked back into the living room, "I ran a hot shower for you, and there's a bathrobe in there." I said and he came towards me, he stopped in front me and I shook my head before he could do or say anything. "Save it for when you're warm and dry." I said, "The bathroom is door to the left of the room." I added and he paused then went passed me. I let out a breath I didn't realize I was holding.

Unable to help myself I went into the bedroom and I was surprised to see the bathroom door open. I shook my head at myself, sitting on the edge of bed, listening to him. What was I

thinking? We're the only two people here and I am his wife, how many times have I seen his body in all its naked glory? How many times have I showered with him myself?

I squirmed where I sat as I remembered those moments. Damn it, my handsome husband, hot and wet in my shower was not how I saw this day ending. I was supposed to eat away my sorrows in peace. Not imagining myself pinned against the steamed walls as he brought me to mindless pleasure. I stood up before I was tempted to go in there, everything else be damned.

I walked back into the living area and picked up the ice cream bowl and put it back in the freezer. I picked up his wet clothes and mopped up the hardwood floors. I curled up on the sofa and pretended to watch TV when all I can think of is the man occupying my shower.

I looked up when I heard him approach; dressed in the robe I left for him. "Thank you." He said and I shrugged, "I'm your wife, taking care of you comes with the territory." I said, I grabbed one of the pillows and held it tight. One would say it was a defensive stance, as if I could ward him off so long as I clutched it to my chest.

He sat down beside me and I my brows furrowed, "You smell like me." I said, well my body-wash to be exact and he smiled, "I know." He said and I couldn't suppress a laugh. Thinking, only my husband is so comfortable with his own virility to not be bothered by that.

We both sobered up, and he watched me so intensely I dropped my gaze. "You're pregnant." He repeated, almost as if he still couldn't believe it, I knew the feeling. I looked up and nodded, "Can I hold you?" he asked and I paused, apprehensive. "Please." He added and I sighed and moved into the circle of his arms.

I felt his lips at the top of my head "I've missed you so much." He murmured and I closed my eyes. "Me too, to the point where I couldn't sleep." I admitted helplessly, there was no point in pretending.

He knows how much I love him and need him. "I'm sorry baby girl." He said so sincerely, my throat tightened. "I promised I'd be there for you and I wasn't, there's no excuse for that." He added. "Tell me." I said, whatever made him leave must've been big; I remember the look in his eyes. He hated leaving things the way they were between us.

"Dena's mother died." He said, "Oh my God, what happened?" I asked. "She's been sick for quite sometime now." He added then shook his head sadly. "Dena came to claim a piece of Wright Inc. because she felt like its what her mother wanted. They almost lost everything when Johan was pushed out, I wouldn't be surprised if that is what caused her health to deteriorate." He said; I tightened my hold on him, the guilt and shame in his voice breaking my heart.

Even though he played no hand in what his father did, he had a strong moral code that made it hard for him to live with it. It's what indirectly killed his mother as well

"Dena also came here because her mother wanted to see me." He said, "I couldn't not go, baby girl. After everything, I had to hear what she had to say, she deserved that much at least." He added. I paused, lost for words really. "I wanted to tell you, but Dena asked me to keep it between us." He said, "This whole thing and her mother's condition was a sensitive issue to her, and I couldn't betray her confidence." He said and I understood, my brows furrowed, I had put him in a hard place and I can understand why.

That's Andrew for you, he's there for his friends as well, and that says a lot about his character. Its one of the many other things I love so much about him too. "I'm sorry for asking

you to.” I said; he shook his head at me. “This was something that went beyond Dena, and me.” He said. “And me,” I added, “Nothing goes beyond you.” He whispered, caressing my jaw and neck “But this felt like something *had* to do.” He added.

He paused for a minute, “I’d like to think I’m not a coward, but it was hard baby girl, looking into her eyes.” He said and my throat tightened at the catch in his voice. “Don’t fret Andrew and tell Henry I forgive him, she said to me.”

“Andrew...” I nuzzled onto the crook of his neck, imagining how hard that must’ve been on him. Accepting forgiveness is hard, especially when it feels undeserved.

Andrew made a self-depreciating sound, “That was before she apologized to me, *to me*, for not being there when my mother died.” He said, “She had every reason to hate us all, yet she felt sorry she wasn’t there for me,” He added, we stayed like that for a while silent.

“Are you going to tell him?” I asked, “Yes, he should have this weigh on his conscience.” He said. When the time came Andrew’s father stepped down from Wright Inc. quite graciously, something I wasn’t sure he’d do. From what I know, he’s in Pretoria a lot now. He still owns multiple entities and is a major shareholder in one or two big companies. His relationship with Andrew hasn’t gotten any easier over the years, but he’s still his father. And every child wants a healthy, working relationship with its parent, no matter what, its human nature.

Andrew chuckled without humor, “Hell even you’ve forgiven him for threatening your safety, everyone has forgiven him, everyone but me,” He said and I looked up at him. “Do you want to forgive him?” I asked and he looked down at me, “I do.”

CHAPTER 13

Andrew and I decided to keep my pregnancy to ourselves for a while, or at least until I'm a month or two along. We decided to tell Martin, Ennis and I told Kay as well. She was beside herself, especially knowing how much I'd wanted it. This year we were spending Christmas with Andrew's family, over the years his family has warmed up to me. Some more than others, but I couldn't complain much.

We were gathering at his grandparents' property just outside of Port Elizabeth. We headed down there a day before Christmas Eve. I'd never been there myself before so the beauty and enormity of the place shocked me a little. I don't know why that is, I knew Andrew came from money, stretching way beyond his father's generation. The seaside property was warm and homely despite its size and beauty.

"What do you think?" Andrew asked, "Its lovely." I said, "It's been in our family for over ninety years." He said, answering my silent question. The two-story mansion had a bit of modern edge despite its time span. Unless it was renovated not so long ago, I decided that's the case. It was pretty secluded, which said a lot about how the Wrights value their privacy.

Its best feature was the closed beach just in the distance. "I spent countless holidays here." He said with a small chuckle, and I could almost see little Andrew playing around the beach, making sand castles.

I remember him mentioning that he came here less frequently as he grew older and the more estranged he grew to his own dad.

I made a silent promise things would be different with our child, our children. I wanted them to alternate between here and Marapong with the utmost ease. To love both sides of their parents, that were so different yet the same on the most basic level.

We found Andrew's aunt Lea and her husband Mark, his uncle Tim. His cousins Sarah and Terry, whom I was meeting for the first time because they flew in from London.

"You two finally decided to join us." I turned around to see Cole approaching, a big grin on his face. Him and Andrew shared a fervent man hug before he hugged me. Cole was undoubtedly my favorite of all Andrew's relatives and maybe Lea, she was Andrew and I's biggest fan from this side of his family. "Is Jasmine here with you?" I asked, I'd been hoping to see her too. It's been well over two years since I last saw any of them.

He and Jasmine—who I'd initially met as one of Ana's model friends— started dating when Andrew and I got married. Personally I've grown closer to Jasmine, I considered her a friend. "She's also spending time with family in Upington. She'll be in Cape Town when we head down there." He said. "And note I say 'when' so you two can't pull out, not if you want Scott's wrath." He added.

There was a second gathering for New Year's in Cape Town, from what I've heard it's going to be big. I heard they rented out a portion of a five star hotel in Camps Bay just for our little party. Calling it little would be an understatement but it's primarily friends getting together. It had a sort of reunion feel to it and I was both excited and apprehensive.

Some of the people I haven't seen for years and some I wasn't all that close with, like Ana. I sighed inwardly, Andrew's Barbie doll like friend Ana and I were amiable enough to each other but we won't be getting pedicures together anytime soon.

"Keep your pants on, we'll be there." Andrew teased.

Terry grabbed the cloth off of Cole's shoulder, "I'll take over." He said and Cole gave him an appreciative nod. "You better have not lost your touch." Cole said and Terry shot him a playful glare, before walking passed the open back door. I caught the distinct smell of meat being flame grilled. "You guys are having a braai?" I asked excitedly.

Cole chuckled and looked at Andrew, "I'll say it again, congratulations on this one." He said, "Any woman who knows and loves her meat is a keeper." He added and Andrew smiled at me, "I married her, didn't I?" he said, "Smart man, I can't even get Jasmine to have a taste." He said, "Cut her some slack, she has to maintain that model body of hers." I said, "Me on the other hand." I added, I loved food too much.

As if reading my mind, "Damn where do you put it?" Cole asked and I chuckled, "Very funny Cole." I said, then got side tracked when Lea came in and pulled me aside.

Andrew, Cole and Terry had left for the city when I decided on a stroll along the beach. Andrew had wanted to stay behind because I had vomited out my breakfast. He finally gave in after reassuring him that I'm fine and that he was worrying too much. I smiled to myself, a little case of morning sickness and he's ready to put everything on hold. I lightly kicked the beach sand as I walked barefooted. I just know he's going to be that dad, the over protective one, firm but sweet too.

My light green printed long dress blew against my legs in the breeze famous to Port Elizabeth. It's then that it hit me, I'm happy; despite everything, that's what we all aspire to. It's so easy to go through the motions in life, not to take note of the little yet important things. I sunk onto the sand, using my hands to balance myself as I leaned back. Staring at the endless blue of the ocean, and listening out to the soft waves.

I'm happy and blessed; I have a career I'm proud of and love. I'm married to the love of my life and we're starting a family together. Life has its ups and downs but for now I can revel in the fact that I wouldn't have it any other way.

I looked up when I heard someone approach, Sarah came over smiling at me. "Can I join you?" she asked, "Absolutely." I said and she settled next to me. She was wearing a pair of faded shorts that showed off her legs and a bright yellow slouchy tee, she too was barefooted. She tilted her head back and closed her light brown eyes, her dark blond hair catching in the breeze.

"I miss the hot South African sun," she said and I slightly smiled as she opened her eyes. "Is London as cold and wet as everyone thinks it is?" I asked and she chuckled, "Oh yeah, I never thought I'd get used to it," She said, "I am now but I still miss this occasionally." She added.

Sarah and I went back and forth like that, getting to know each other more, and the more we talked the more I started to like her. She laughed before she sobered up, pausing a little when I told her how Andrew and I met. "You and Andrew, it couldn't have been easy in the

beginning." She said, even now, nothing about Andrew and I's relationship is easy. We're way too intense, way too passionate with each other to ever call what we have easy.

"No it wasn't, we...well / wasn't always comfortable with how different we are, and I'm not talking about the race aspect." I said, "For me that never mattered as much as it did to other people." I added. "Other people meaning my family." She said, her tone light but sheepish. "And mine." I added. I paused, I don't know why I felt so comfortable talking to her about this. I hardly ever discuss the nature of my relationship with Andrew even with people I considered friends.

Maybe it's the way she was looking at me, listening, like she was actually invested in it. Which is crazy for someone I just met only yesterday. Maybe I was wrong in assuming she and Andrew weren't close, or maybe I'm the one seeking closeness.

"I had to get over my own insecurities first." I said, some I still do. "You have insecurities? I never would've guessed that when I first saw you." She said and my brows furrowed. "My initial thought of you was, beautiful, confident, smart..." "Now you're just blowing smoke up my butt." I pointed out dryly and she chuckled then shrugged. There was a bit of a pause and something told me she was waiting for me to continue.

"I've practically played it safe my whole life and Andrew was a wildcard." I said, "A very hot, charming, dangerous wildcard." I allowed, inducing a laugh from Sarah. "But you fell in love with him anyways." She said and I gave her a small smile. She paused a little, "Thank you. For taking a chance on him." She said more solemnly than I expected.

"He and I weren't all that close growing up but I got to know him a little back in his modeling days." She said and I stilled for a second. Andrew had dedicated two to three years of his life after high school doing some modeling in Europe. He doesn't like to talk about that time of his life, period. So I had blank spaces about it, and I never want to admit, even to myself, that it bothers me a little.

"How was he, back then?" I asked. My voice must've given me away because she paused, eyeing me apprehensively.

Almost as if afraid she'll say too much. "He hasn't told you much about that, has he?" she asked and I nearly groaned but refused to reply. "I'm married to him." I said, *and I'm having his baby* I thought, "Nothing you say will change that." I added. She seemed to accept that, "He was very closed off, unreachable even. He lived his life back then like he had nothing to lose, didn't care about anything or anyone." She said and I appreciated her not trying to sugarcoat it for me. "Must've driven the girls crazy." I said jokingly but something flashed in her brown eyes, it was gone before I could place it, she just shrugged.

"Its good to see him as he is now." She said, "Settled and happy."

CHAPTER 14

I woke up to the feel of Andrew's hands skimming my body through my silk nightdress. My body so attuned to everything he did, hummed with heated anticipation. I kept my eyes closed, "What are you doing?" I said, my voice still groggy from sleep. I could almost hear him smile, "Initiating steamy early morning Christmas sex." He rasped and I tried not to squirm.

Andrew and I are and always have been very physical. I think the longest we've ever gone without making love is three days. I slowly opened my eyes; giving him my most seductive smile, "Show me you got Mr. Wright." I purred. "Careful what you wish for Mrs. Wright." He breathed kissing me, his mouth teasing mine with the promise of mind numbing pleasure.

He took his sweet time arousing me and it drove me wild because I always grew impatient and he never did. He groaned when I took hold of his impressive hard length and stroked him, not so gently. "Greedy little thing, aren't you?" he rasped, "Stop teasing me," I gasped, wishing my voice had a bit more grunt to it but its useless after two orgasms.

"I can go for hours." He said, his finger kneading my swollen clit as he caught one erect nipple between his teeth. "I know." I cried out, "Don't," I pleaded, he had once proved that. Whether it had only seemed like hours or it was, I'm still not sure. "Yes." I moaned when he entered me with one swift thrust. My orgasm wasn't that far off as he lunged into me, picking up speed as he went. My release was swift, breathtaking and Andrew was right behind me.

Catching Andrew off guard I pulled him down and got on top of him. Very much aware he's still hard even after that powerful orgasm when I impaled myself on him. His lust for me knows no end and it drives me wild, makes me wanton. "Let's see if we cant make you come again." I said, starting to move on him. His head fell back heavily on the pillow, "Damn" He swore, his breathing harsh.

I picked up the pace, placing a hand on the solid muscles of his abdomen as I rode him harder, faster.

I slapped his hands away when he reached for me, "No touching." I warned and he let out a colorful expletive. My own pleasure was sapping my concentration and I wanted to achieve my goal before I lost myself in him. I sat back slightly, taking him deeper inside me whenever I slammed back down. "God Zoe." The feral sounds he was making told me he loved it and I was sure he was getting an eyeful too. "Come for me Andrew." I panted, he did and it was even more powerful than the last. I let go too; I threw my head back with a loud moan as a wave of pleasure washed over me again and again.

Andrew sat up, capturing my mouth in a soul-searing kiss. "You rock my world." He said, still struggling to get his own breathing under control. I slowly smiled "I've *been* rocking your world." I murmured with pure feminine pride.

Andrew and I were coming down the staircase as he continued to insistently tease me, whispering sweet nothings to me. "Stop it." I whispered harshly when we came into view of his family. We came across Cole first, "Merry Christmas you two." He said and we returned his smile "Merry Christmas Cole." I said. I was making my way to Sarah in the kitchen area when Cole threw his arm around Andrew. "You look like you've already gotten your present, if you know what I mean." He teased and Andrew chuckled.

Ugh men. Sarah and I greeted each other when a realization came to me, "Are we the last ones to come down?" I asked and she gave me a sly smile. "Yes you are." She said, *oh shit* I thought. "I overslept." I said, damn it almost sounded like a question. She chuckled then shrugged, "Good enough." She said and I felt heat rush to my face.

"Its like that between the two of you huh?" She quietly said, fanning the flames. "We're so not talking about that, especially in here." I said, and she rolled her eyes, "Oh please, don't tell me you haven't done it in the kitchen." She said, and I kept silent, shocked she'd guess it. She spared me a look then chuckled, "You have." She said as a matter of fact. "Did I make a mistake? Becoming too friendly with you?" I playfully scorned and she made a face at me.

"You're adorable when you're embarrassed." She said and I shook my head at her. The rest of the morning progressed in a lazy and carefree fashion. I was enjoying this group's company more and more. I mostly enjoyed the childhood stories as Sarah, Lea and myself prepared the lunch. Just then Lexi, the youngest of Lea's siblings came in then. Lexi was more or less like Lea in a way, but unlike her older sister, we haven't warmed up to each other that much. But we were friendly and polite to one another.

Lea and Sarah were setting up the huge dining table when I felt Andrew's arms wrap around my waist from behind. I smiled, "This smells delicious, and I'm famished." He said; I slapped his hand away before he could touch anything. He chuckled, "Ow." he murmured, his lips brushing against the side of my face and ear, I giggled like a besotted schoolgirl.

"Aww you two are cute." Lea smiled, coming back into the kitchen. "Andrew darling, Cole's asking for you." She added and Andrew gently squeezed me before letting go. We were just gathering around when one more person joined in, I was more than shocked when Andrew's father walked in.

I didn't even know he was coming and by the way I saw Andrew stiffen, he wasn't expecting him to be here either. Lea was the one to enthusiastically greet him first. "Henry, I thought you weren't going to make it." She said after hugging him. He flashed her a handsome smile, I've never thought Henry looked anything like Andrew before, despite the similar eye and hair color. He always looked very fierce to me and untouchable but when he smiled like this, which was very rare, he looked like his son.

He gave me a small but polite smile, "It's good to see you Zoe." He said and I returned the smile, "Same here Mr. Wright." I said and he and Andrew shook hands and exchanged pleasantries, no warmer than if he was a mere acquaintance.

I sat next to Andrew, I didn't get to worry much about the tension Henry's presence might cause. Between Lea, Cole and Tim the conversation was easy, fun and it never stopped flowing throughout the meal. I was helping clean the dishes when I noticed Andrew and Henry weren't with everyone else. I worried, even though Andrew would tell me it's pointless, I did anyway.

I excused myself and went looking for him; this place was so huge I didn't know where to begin. I then found myself outside on the terrace, that's when I saw them in the distance. They seemed deep in conversation but both their postures seemed relaxed. I breathed out slowly, leaning against a pillar, watching them talk. Its no secret to Andrew that I hope he works things out with his father some day but I never try to push him.

There's so much hurt, mistrust and betrayal between the two of them, I'm realistic enough to recognize it'll take time. But this, them talking, is a good sign. It said a lot about Andrew's own feelings on the matter when he admitted he wanted to forgive his father. I just want him to be happy, if reconciliation with his dad contributes to that, I'm all for it.

I didn't hear Tim approaching until he stopped next to me; neither of us said anything as we watched them. "It didn't use to be like this between them." Tim spoke first. I haven't spoken to Tim one on one, but something in his tone told me he knows more about this than anyone else. Which made me wonder just how much he knew.

"Andrew was his father's son, and Henry adored him." He added and I could imagine it, so clearly. Andrew, his father and mother; happy, before his father's choices tore their family apart. "What went wrong?" I asked and he looked at me this time. "Something tells me you have a pretty good idea what." He said, so he does know, everything.

"I get it though, you only know one side to this story." He said, "Henry took Camille's death hard, he dealt with that by pushing everyone away including Andrew." He added. "Part of me thinks he believed it was his penance, to lose the woman he loves *and* his son." He said after a pause.

People make mistakes, some more catastrophic than others, but its part of being human. I have nothing against Henry personally but I don't want to feel sympathy for him, knowing what his rejection did to Andrew. I wanted Henry to fix things, so my husband can heal. Neglecting Andrew the way he did had cut him deep and he's been bleeding all his life. I want that wound stitched so he can heal.

"I'm not making excuses for him, don't get me wrong, but he's not an awful person and he loves Andrew." He added.

I paused, realizing that he thinks I don't approve of them working things out. I tried not to let that bother me. "Does my opinion of him matter?" I asked calmly. Tim thought about it for a second, "No." he said and I appreciated his honesty. "But it matters to Andrew." He added and I processed what he's implying. "You think I can stop Andrew from wanting his father in his life?" I asked, shocked he'd think I can, let alone want to.

"You doubt it?" he said, "That's interesting." He mused then paused. He studied me a little. "But you're not going to stop him, I see that now." He said, "You want them to resolve their differences." He added. "I want Andrew to be happy." I allowed and he accepted that. "Fair enough." He said. He was looking out for his brother and nephew, I couldn't fault him for that. He didn't know me well enough to trust me, I could accept that too for now.

He gave me a parting nod before he left, I felt like we'd established an understanding. It wasn't much but it was something. I looked back to the pair and saw them shake hands and Henry affectionately patted Andrew's shoulder then he walked towards the house. I stood waiting when he stopped in front of me, "You're leaving." I said, I didn't know how I knew that but I just did.

He nodded, "Take care of him." He said, his tone sincere, "Always." I promised and he nodded then walked back into the house.

I made my way to Andrew who had his back to me; hands in his jean pockets looking out at the ocean. He must've heard me coming when he turned to face me, his thoughtful expression softened by the smile he flashed me.

He took me into his arms and I hugged him back, standing on my tiptoes when I wrapped my arms around his neck. "Are you okay?" I asked, releasing him after a long while. He nodded and gave me a small smile, "Don't get ahead of yourself, you're not going to see any fatherly-son hugs yet." He said and I smiled back, noting he said yet. "Baby steps." I agreed, and he kissed my forehead.

"Come, your Christmas present awaits." I said, taking his hand, leading him back to the house. "Um...would you be mad if I told you I didn't get you anything?" he said and I shot him a look.

"Very funny Wright." I said and he chuckled wrapping his arm around my shoulder.

CHAPTER 15

Lexi had left with Henry on Christmas day; Tim left the next day, Lea and her husband left later on. Andrew and I decided to enjoy Port Elizabeth for a few more days while Cole drove down to Cape Town with Sarah and Terry. I'd just gotten out of the bathroom of our hotel suite. This hotel was right in the middle of the city; so it had a very vicinage view of the Friendly City.

Andrew was sprawled on the bed flicking through the channels on the flat screen, "We're going out tonight." He said to me, his gaze heating as it raked over my towel wrapped body. It almost seems second nature to him, to want me, desire me on sight. It extremely pleased the siren in me. "Oh?" I said, "I've been invited to a automobile expo." He said.

I raised my eyebrow, it sounded fancy "Invite only?" I asked and he nodded quickly, "I want to go, and not alone." He said and I chuckled, "So that is why you wanted to stay behind." I said and he gave me an impish grin. I walked over to him; resting my one knee and hands on the bed as I leaned into him. "I don't know, looking at cars all night doesn't sound all that fun to me," I said playfully, "What incentive do I have to go?" I added,

"Well the pleasure of my company of course." He said and I shot him a skeptical look and he smiled, "Tell you what, come with me and I'll make you feel really good afterwards." He murmured, his hand cupping the back of my bare thigh, naughtily moving up almost to my butt cheek. I forced myself to remain still; I swallowed back the sudden rush of sexual yearning. "How about you make me feel really good now *and* afterwards." I countered.

His sensual mouth curved up slightly, "You drive a hard bargain." He said and I shrugged, "Deal." He said swiftly getting rid of the towel before pulling me down and rolling me onto my back

Suddenly I was very glad I came prepared for anything. I initially couldn't decide what dress I wanted to wear to the New Year's party thing in Cape Town so I brought three dresses along figuring I'll decide on the night or something. Now I'll have two to choose from as I dawned the red strapless Chanel mini dress, its bodice made of sparkling material while the high waist tulle skirt was simple, unmarked. I paired it with black pumps and long fancy Swarovski earrings were my only accessories. I used some styling gel on my short hair to create classic Hollywood waves. Opted for dramatic eye makeup and the rest sheer.

Satisfied with my handy work I started cramming everything I'll need into my clutch bag. Just then Andrew walked back into the bedroom, he'd already dressed in his black tux when he stepped out but I had to take a moment to appreciate how yummy he looked.

"A car will be ready for us in ten..." he trailed off when he looked at me. I smiled, "How do I look?" I asked and he shook his head slightly, as if clearing it. "You look incredible." He said walking over to me, he put his hands on my waist "I married a stunner." He added and I grinned, it never gets old. "Say that again." I said, "You are stunning." He whispered, kissing my neck. Its only when I'm wearing heels close to six inches high that I'm eye level with Andrew. He went into dangerous territory when his mouth roamed just above the modest cleavage my dress allowed.

"Quit it." I warned and he lifted his head, it tilted back and his eyes closed for a second. He opened them, "You bewitch me Tumi." He admitted, his tone almost begrudging. "You ready?" he asked and I nodded and he let me lead the way out. We were almost to the elevators "I can totally feel you checking me out." I remarked dryly, without looking at him. He was even walking slightly back so he could do it with more ease.

I heard him chuckle, "I've put a ring on it, so I have carte blanche." He said and I laughed.

The car expo was being held at the Goldfields Auditorium, the place was bigger than I initially thought. I was right about it being a fancy spectacle but I underestimated the attendance. I figured some have even come from outside the country for it. "Good evening Mr. Mrs. Wright." Some young man greeted us enthusiastically. He was dressed in khaki pants and a navy blue golf shirt with the name of the expo on it.

"My name is Calvin and I'll be your guide for the evening." He added.

I wasn't sure if every couple got their own tour guide or if we were getting special treatment, given that he just addressed us by name I presume it's the latter.

A pretty waitress stopped in front of us and offered a glass of champagne; I declined while Andrew took one. He offered his free arm and I took it before we followed Calvin. I was mostly impressed by the security detail here, elaborate yet inconspicuous all at once. There was need for it; this whole place was filled with the world's most expensive automobiles. From racing cars, luxury cars to super cars. I'll have to ask Andrew to take my little brother instead if he ever went to one of these again.

He would thoroughly enjoy it, I had a subtle appreciation for cars myself but I wasn't a fanatic like Samuel and my husband. So I zoned out a little during the tour.

Thankfully there weren't any paparazzi, but there were a few photographers taking shots of the affluent crowd, I spotted a few famous faces as well.

Despite his power Andrew doesn't generate a lot of media attention, something I 'am more than content with. We get photographed whenever we go to these high profile events. But the one time we received any real publicity was a year ago when a popular lifestyle magazine listed the top twenty richest couples in the country. Consequently we topped that list, so they did a two-page spread on us. Marti is so proud of it; she still has that particular issue stashed in plain view. Kay does too.

I've always known Andrew is wealthy and for me that's was all I need to know. I can admit to myself that I do shy away from knowing exactly how many figures are in his bank account. Hence till this day I refuse to read that magazine spread, and I refuse to let Marti or Kay tell me what our estimated net worth was. "Probably wise, I nearly fainted when I saw, and it's just an estimation." Kay had teased, much to my annoyance.

I still have no desire to remove my blissful ignorance on this, and that suits both Andrew and I just fine. Although he thinks its ridiculous, he doesn't force the issue. The only time his money was ever a bone of contention between us was after our wedding and we dealt with the legal aspects. Tony, one of his best lawyers and friend had been entrusted to handle it. I remember sitting in a small conference room in the Wright Inc. offices as he talked us through it.

The meeting was almost over when Tony brought up the topic of a prenuptial agreement.

Because of this ignorance I so value, it had never even crossed my mind and Andrew had never discussed it with me. By the way he stiffened and scowled at his friend I'm guessing he didn't want it period. "Tony, we discussed this." He said, the anger in his tone measured. Tony schooled his features, clearly refusing to be intimidated by him, "Yes we did, but I thought I should run it by your wife too maybe she might have a different opinion." He said.

The situation became very clear then, Andrew was the besotted fool who was letting love cloud his better judgment. So Tony took it upon himself to protect his interests. Knowing he had friends like Tony, who were looking out for him even against his own wishes, took the initial sting out of it.

Andrew was about to argue when I raised my hand to stop him, "I want to hear him out." I said and Andrew stared at me for a minute before sitting back in angry silence. He never said anything as Tony explained the terms of the prenup to me. I could feel his anger bristling off of him but I schooled my own expression as I listened to Tony explain what I'd be entitled to in the case of divorce and what was off limits.

We'd been interrupted when Andrew's secretary called him out on urgent business. "You—" he glared at Tony "—I want to see in my office." He bit out, then he looked at me, "Don't you dare touch that thing." He said before he walked out of the room. Tony breathed out, regarding me wearily. "Listen Zoe, you have to know that I have nothing against you personally or your marriage to Andrew. I do believe you love him." He said and I knew he was sincere.

I nodded, "I understand, you're just trying to protect your friend, I respect that and I appreciate it, even if he doesn't." I said and I swallowed, "I'll sign the papers." I said decidedly and he looked a bit surprised but he had been hoping I'd agree or else he wouldn't have risked Andrew's wrath by bringing it up.

"He won't be happy." He said and we both knew that was a huge understatement. "True, but it'll be done." I said and he nodded.

CHAPTER 16

A few days later Tony had brought the papers to the Nixon Brooks offices and I looked them over again before I signed. When Andrew found out what we'd done, he'd been furious at best, more so at me. We had a nasty fight about it but he'd forgiven me. Even now I sometimes wonder if he still hovers some indignation for what we did. His friend for compiling the agreement and me for signing it, on both accounts against his wishes and behind his back.

For me I still don't regret the decision I made, I love and want him, only him. I wanted to make that clear whether he wanted me to or not. What I'm not sure of is if that agreement is still in existence.

I know Andrew, we stopped fighting and had heartbreakingly intense make-up sex, but he's not one to let things be.

He would have to divorce me—yes *him*, because there's no way on this earth that I ever could—to know if it's in effect. I don't care about it and I've never brought it up again, I still don't see the need to.

Tony can rest assured knowing he'd done everything he possibly could and I had proven my point. End of story.

A woman's sharp laugh close by brought me back to the present. We stopped the longest in front of an impressive red sports car. The Lamborghini Huracán LP 610-4 is what Calvin called it as he and Andrew talked specs and horsepower, they lost me on the technical stuff so I gave up trying to follow. Andrew looked at me, "What do you think?" he asked, shocked he wanted my opinion when he'd let me zone out for most of the tour.

"The car looks badass, I like that." I said, looking at it again, totally badass. "The color?" he probed, "I think the red looks really good." I said and he nodded turning back to Calvin "We'll take it, exactly as it is." He said shocking both Calvin and I, I wasn't sure how I looked but Calvin was gaping then he remembered himself. "Of course, I'll get the relevant people." He said before he scurried away.

I was still staring at Andrew and he was pretending to be oblivious to that, "What about you, you see anything you like?" he asked, "You can't be serious." I said, "About what, getting this car, or getting something for you too?" he said, "Both." I said, he shrugged, "I've always wanted a sports car." He said and I raised my eyebrows at him. "Your Maserati is basically a sports car." I pointed out and he chuckled, "True but you don't think it's badass." He said and just like that I'm perplexed into silence.

"You sure you don't want something?" He asked, looking around, "I can see you sliding your sexy behind into that 458 Italia." He said, pointing at a bright yellow Ferrari a couple of feet away. "No thanks, I'm perfectly happy with my Mercedes." I said, even more so because I'd refused when he wanted to buy it for me instead.

He feigned disapproval, "And if you hadn't been so stubborn, I would've gotten you a top of the range AMG Black." He said; I rolled my eyes at him. "Suck it up and keep your big spending to yourself." I said and he shook his head. "Do you know how unfair that is? You already have your birthday prohibited and our anniversary restricted." He said, "That's not entirely true.

My 25th birthday." I reminded him, I always flash it like a badge whenever I want to stop him splurging on me. "I went on an all time shopping spree with one of *your* credit cards." I added.

With some help from Kay and Marti I'd spent over half million rands on designer clothes, shoes, handbags and accessories. "You want to know why I did that?" I asked and he smiled, "You wanted to appease my male ego?" he said, "Exactly." I said, "And it's not happening again." I said and he shook his head at me.

"I loved your Christmas present." I added sweetly cutting him off, "Even more so because I didn't spend a dime?" he asked and I answered with a big smile.

He chuckled kissing my forehead; he'd given me a charm bracelet that had belonged to his mother. Said his mother put a charm on it for every major occurrence in his life. Small feet for his first steps as a baby, the letters ABC for his first words, a backpack for his first day of school...

I had cried like a baby when he showed me the two charms he's added himself, a heart for the day he met me, and a ring for when he married me.

Calvin had come back with some other man in a suit, "Mr. Botha will see you now sir." He said to Andrew and they shook hands. "You want to have a look around?" he asked, "Yeah sure, go I'll be fine with Calvin." I said and he walked away with Mr. Botha.

I looked at the Lamborghini again, "The Huracán is an amazing car, Mr. Wright made a wise choice." Calvin said, "What does the name mean?" I asked, "Its Spanish for hurricane." He said and I nodded. The irony of that wasn't lost on me. I'd always compared Andrew and the way he made me feel to a hurricane. I looked at the car one more time and followed Calvin.

We drove down to Cape Town in his new sports car, "It'd be quicker to take the Lambo." He'd said, and sure enough it was with him driving at a consistent speed of just above the limit for the N2 road. Its true what they say about boys and their toys, he seemed to been thoroughly enjoying himself behind the wheel. The videogame like speed and the powerful roar of the car was going to take some getting used to. I was right, it was badass and like the name it was so him.

We arrived at Scott's house in Camps Bay around dusk, "Damn these speed limits." He said as we got out of the car.

"I want to see how far this baby can run, I think I'll take it for a spin around Khayalami." He said and my eyes widened. Thinking of him going faster than he was, on a formula one circuit made the hairs on my neck stand out. "Andrew do you want me to have a heart attack?" I asked, walking over to him and he shook his head, "Never do that." I added and he chuckled taking me into his arms.

"Okay I wont." He said, clearly thinking I'm being melodramatic but I wasn't letting him off the hook that easy.

"Swear to me." I insisted and he sighed but did.

Just then Cole came out with Scott, Cole's face was priceless when he took in the car and Scott whistled. "Andrew! You bastard!" Cole bawled, "You let me come here knowing you were going car shopping?" he added and Scott greeted me before he joined Cole in admiring the automobile.

"How does it drive?" he asked, "Its incredible and very powerful." Andrew replied, "No kidding man, we should take it around a track." Scott said and Cole patted his back, "I like the way you think my friend, hit up Khayalami." He said and I groaned stepping out of Andrew's arms, ugh why do I even bother? Men!

Andrew stifled a smile, "Sorry guys I made a promise I wouldn't." he said and the two of them looked at me then back at Andrew.

"If you're not going to do it, pass the keys I will." Cole said. "No you won't." Jasmine said walking over to us, I hugged her tightly and she said hi to Andrew before turning to her frowning boyfriend. "I'm serious Cole." She said.

"Damn you women." He muttered, "We can't live with you." He said and we all laughed, "Yet you can't live without us." Jasmine said slipping an arm around Cole's waist and he shook his head but smiled. "That's true." Andrew said looking at me and I smiled at him.

Jasmine, Sarah and I spent the last day of the year taking it easy and pampering ourselves, we're saving the exertion of energy for tonight's party. We treated ourselves to a full on spa day, massages, facials, nails and hair. "Do you guys know exactly who's coming tonight?" I asked, "Its basically just friends of friends. I gather mostly Scott, Cole and Andrew's friends." Sarah said and I nodded.

The only one of my friends I was positive will be there is Isaac; I couldn't wait to see him. Last time I saw him was two years ago when I came to the Nixon Brooks' Cape Town office.

Unlike me, the firm fresh out of Tuks recruited him, but with him living here and me in Joburg we couldn't really see each other that much and unlike the girls, we didn't talk as often.

"Ana's gonna be there, are you okay with that?" she asked, when it came down to it Jasmine had stood in my corner when she warned me about her beautiful model friend. That was when we truly started warming up to each other. "Yeah, she's Andrew's friend that doesn't mean we have to be best friends." I said and she nodded.

"Ana? I never liked her." Sarah said, then I remembered that she'd spent some time with Andrew and her when they modeled together. "No offense." She added to Jasmine and she gave a small smile, "None taken." She said. "Oh there's someone you'll definitely be happy to see tonight." Jasmine said and my brows furrowed, besides my handsome husband? "What? Who?" I asked, "There's no fun in ruining the surprise." Sarah said and I rolled my eyes at them both.

"I like it, has a very edgy feel to it." Said Jasmine when the hairstylist was done with me.

I had to agree, my normally bouncy and waving do was made straighter and with my hair being slightly longer in front, it fell nicely to my eyes and left cheek. "Me next." Sarah said, "I want a sleek bob." She added shocking both Jasmine and I. "You want to cut your hair? You sure?" I asked, eyeing her beautiful long blond tresses. She smiled, "Yeah, why not, it's a new year." She said, "Oh my God." Jasmine chuckled.

CHAPTER 17

We'd gotten back to the house later than we'd anticipated. "Where are the guys?" Sarah asked, she looked so different with her new hair, different in a very good way. "Left without us." Jasmine said, reading a text from Cole aloud. "Aww." I teased her when she read the 'love you' part. "Shut up, you're married." She said and I chuckled.

We got ready speedily but it wouldn't be enough to make it to the party before it starts. "It never hurts to be fashionably late." Jasmine said, who was a knock out in a champagne-colored mini dress and sky-high heels. "True that." Sarah seconded, "I'll get the car around." She added before walking out. She looked like a movie star with a white cocktail dress and chic ankle boots

"Damn Zoe, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't even a little jealous of that LBD." She said and I chuckled, I'd decided to go with the classic. The dress was pretty simple, its most beautiful and sexy feature was the plunging back, and I paired it with similar color pumps. I kept my make up light, but added some spunk with burgundy lipstick. I wore the bracelet Andrew gave me and I was ready to go. "Lets go rock this party." I said and she grinned, leading the way out.

The hotel the party was being hosted at was absolutely beautiful and very A-list. The venue itself was amazing; it was practically a roof top party with an indoor alternative

The live DJ and dance floor was outside, although the music resonated through the whole venue. The bar was indoors along with a few games, pool and foosball from what I could see. There were more people than I thought there would be, but I saw more familiar faces than I expected. "Finally you guys made it." Cole said when we joined in the group.

Andrew, who looked so simple yet unreal, he wore a pair of black jeans and a casual cream shirt, rolled up at the sleeves and a black hat. He rarely wears them and I keep telling him how sexy they look on him, guess he decided to indulge me tonight. You'd even think we decided on the black but we didn't. Scott and Cole looked effortlessly cool; Britney, Gia and Ana looked their usual model stylish. But out of everyone I was excited to see was Isaac.

After greeting everyone else I walked over to Andrew fitting nicely into the round of my husband's arm.

He placed a lingering kiss to my cheek, "Gorgeous." He said and I smiled, "Look who's here." He said and I followed his gaze to see a familiar blond walking towards us, "Maddy!" I exclaimed intercepting her with a hug. "Hey Jeremy." I greeted her husband "Its good to see you Zoe." He smiled back, "Likewise." I replied and he left us to our female squealing. "How are you here?" I asked, "Well Andrew gave me a call and Jer and I figured why not head down. I'm glad we did, this looks way more exciting than what my family had planned." She said and I chuckled.

We found our way back to the group again. "Cole, you're never going to beat me and Andrew in a game of foosball, we rein supreme." A woman appeared, her accent clearly Italian. Jasmine pivoted and it was her turn to squeal, "Oh my God! Cece!" she caught the woman in a tight hug, "Hey Jas." She said, Jasmine turned her gaze to her friends, "Why didn't you tell me she was here?" she asked, "Surprise." Ana said and Cece giggled.

"I literally just flew in today, it's been insane." She said; she was a model along with Ana and her friends. She must know Cole and Andrew personally too from her tone earlier. She did

look like a model except she trumped every single one of her friends, including Ana, Barbie doll Ana! Cece is beautiful in an ethereal sort of way.

She was dressed in a pair of high fashion lose fitting shorts and a sleeveless blouse, the Chanel chain adding a cheeky flavor to her cool outfit. Her long mahogany hair only partially covered by the nude colored hat she was wearing, her pumps the same color. I looked at her and thought; only she could pull all of that off.

The most intriguing thing about her was her cool and easygoing aura; upon just looking at her I wanted to be her friend. "Oops, where are my manners?" she said walking over my side and Maddy, probably the only two people here she doesn't know. "This is Cecelia, a friend of mine, we were all together in Europe." Andrew said, "This is Maddy and her husband Jeremy." He introduced and Cece politely greeted and shook hands with the two.

"I swear Andrew is the only person who calls me Cecelia, even my parents don't." she joked and everyone chuckled. "And you must be Zoe." She said, flashing me a bright smile, I smiled back at her extending a hand, but she pulled me in for a quick hug. "Its good to meet you." She said, "Same here." I said, "He's told me a little bit about you, before you got here." She said, and turned her bright grey eyes to Andrew "She's so pretty." She said.

I wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry because she genuinely sounded sincere. She said down next to me when the guys fetched drinks. "What do you do Zoe?" she asked, "I'm an actuary." I said, "Whoa, big brains as well." She said, "You must think we're utterly stupid." She said referring to herself and her group of friends.

"I don't believe in stereotypes." I said, "And you don't strike me as stupid." I added; it was the truth. She chuckled, "I'm glad to hear that." She said, "I tend to come across as a whack job." She added and I chuckled.

To me she came across as fun and free spirited, and it was infectious. "I'm really glad Andrew found you." She said with a smile, "Thank you." I said and she stood up and joined the chatter with her friends. Maddy appeared next to me, "I want to hate her, but I can't." she muttered, "I know." I said before turning my gaze back to my best friend.

As the night grew later, we began to have more fun, the conversations got funnier, crazier. "You've been talking a whole lot of smack my friend." Cece said to Cole, who remained undefeated in foosball tonight. "Jas grab your man, Andrew and I are going to school you." She added, "Bring it." Jasmine said and Cole just smirked, not the least bit threatened.

"I can't Cecelia." Andrew said, and I stifled a wince at the way he said her full name. Like there's a special bond they don't share with their other friends. "Oh come on. We can take these two down." Cece said, "Go play, I want to see you in action." I said smiling and Andrew threw his head back in defeat then stood up.

"I'm warning you, I'm a bit rusty." He said to Cece, "We'll still beat them anyway." She said confidently. Cece stopped in front of me, "I owe you one." She said in a theatrical whisper.

I gave her a nod, my smile falling slightly as I watched them go over to the foosball table. Everyone else going over there to watch; "I'm gonna run to the ladies room." Maddy said to me and I nodded.

A minute later Ana came up from behind me, "Aren't you playing?" She asked, sitting down "I'm trying to see who is easy pickings." I admitted, "Maybe I'll challenge Britney once they're

done." I said and Ana chuckled, "Clever." She said, "You?" I asked and she shook her head. "Terrible hand-eye coordination." She said, "I'll only be embarrassing myself." She added.

I looked to the group, they started cheering as the pairs started twisting and jerking at the rods frantically. I watched Andrew and Cece high five each other after scoring again, their small audience cheering them on. They seemed like they'd been playing together their whole lives.

"You haven't touched your drink." Ana commented and I looked back at her. "Um, I'm trying to pace myself tonight." I said, her brows furrowed, "You haven't really touched anything..." she trailed off, looking at Andrew then at me, before her blue eyes fell to my abdomen, "Oh." She said and I groaned inwardly.

Of all the people to notice and figure out I'm pregnant; it had to be her. She paused a little, "Congratulations." She said, "Thank you." I said, "I'm sorry to intrude on your privacy like that, obviously you haven't told a lot of people." She said and I shook my head at her.

"No worries." I said, I couldn't exactly fault her for guessing correctly. "Wow." She said, and then looked towards the ongoing match. "Cece totally owes me, she swore Andrew would never settle down after she broke off their engagement." She said and I froze, everything just froze. "What?" There was a wheezing sound and I realized it came from me.

Ana turned her gaze back to me and they slowly widened realizing that's news to me. "Oh my God, I thought you knew..." she trailed off, I wasn't even sure if she was genuinely shocked that's the case or she's just faking it. "I'm so sorry, I-I honestly thought you knew." She fretted, "Oh God, please don't tell Andrew I told you please." She pleaded, over the roaring in my ears I realized she was genuinely freaking out. I could only manage a nod and she stood up after murmuring another apology.

I spotted Sarah outside on the dance floor and I don't know how but I just charged towards her. I needed her to tell me Ana is playing her mind games again; I needed to hear it, but deep down inside... I pulled her aside, she took one look at my face and her smile fell. "Tell me the truth." I said before she could say anything. "Andrew and Cecelia—" I said her full name exactly how Andrew says it "—Were they engaged?" I asked and watched her brown eyes widen and not in a way that made me think she didn't know what the hell I was on about. For a second I thought I was going to be sick, right here, on the dance floor. "Zoe, who told..."

"Say it." I prompted and she dropped her gaze, but her demeanor tense and fearful. "Zoe it was a long time ago and like I said back then Andrew..." a tearless sob tore out of me, stopping her. The people around us went crazy, as She Wolf by David Guetta played "How could you not tell me?" I accused, *how could he?*

Not waiting for answer I went passed her, I didn't even hear if she tried calling me back. I stopped for a second, looking back inside to see my gorgeous husband, grinning and having fun with the woman he'd chosen first. I got out of there before like Sia / fell to pieces.

CHAPTER 18

I don't know how I made it out of the hotel and found myself at the beach, but I was grateful I'd be alone, left in peace. I sunk onto the beach sand dropping the Louboutins I'd been carrying and I let the tears come. I'm pretty sure this is not the treatment Balenciaga would've wanted for his dress but I really didn't care. I wanted to scream, scream so loudly, why this? Why now? Why tonight? But I just sobbed silently.

The waves and sounds of the ocean seemed to lament with me.

I knew it, deep down inside I could feel it, and I saw it too. The connection they had, even now in friendship its there. Sarah said it was a long time ago, yes it was a long time ago, and yes he's married to me now but oh my God it hurts.

Knowing he'd loved her first, enough to want to spend the rest of his life with her, he was going to, until she broke it off.

I know he loves me but it's killing me to think he's settling for me because she's the one who got away. The most pitiful thing was that even knowing this, I still like her and I still want to be her friend.

It's a blow. Andrew prides himself on being the only man to ever know the pleasure of my body, that he's my first and last love. And I prided myself on being the only one who ever knew the real him, the only one to ever know his heart, the only one to ever reach it, touch it. Turns out she did before me, and it's a hard pill to swallow.

I glanced at the charm bracelet he gave me, every charm on there representing a significant moment in his life. The atmosphere of celebration was palpable even from here, and my miserable bubble. I spared my watch a lame glance, an hour and a half till midnight, till a brand new year, and I'm here with tears on my face. Happy freaking New Years to me!

I wrapped my arms around my middle, letting the thought of my baby, *his* baby comfort me. This doesn't change anything, I'm not a teenager anymore, I love Andrew and I made vows to him. I'll go back to the party and brave the night, then he and I will talk it over. Hopefully I'll let it go and put this behind us. Right now I'm still reeling, I need to settle and pull it together before I can go back out there.

I just silently prayed that Sarah hasn't blown the whistle on me, maybe that would buy me a little more time. I dug out a tissue from my clutch bag and I noticed five missed calls from Andrew, guess my time is up. Crap, I didn't charge my phone when we got back to the house, so my battery was very low.

Just then it showed an incoming call from Andrew, I didn't want him to worry so I answered, "Andrew." I said, wincing at the sound of my voice. "Zoe, thank God. Please don't hang up baby girl." He pleaded, the relief in his voice very intense. "Where are you? I need to find you." He said, and I looked around, "I—I'm not sure, I went out the east exit of the hotel, I'm at the beach." I said, "There's a bunch of palm trees this side." I added.

"Stay put okay, let me find you." He said, "I'm sorry Andrew, I didn't mean to worry you I just needed a moment alone..."

"Shush baby girl, just hang in there I'm coming to you..." and my phone died. I shoved it back into my clutch bag and waited, it was only a minute before I heard him "Zoe!" he called

out, and I saw him. "Andrew!" I cried out and the moment he saw me he broke off into a run, only stopped to haul me into his arms. Holding me so tightly, I found it hard to breathe a little.

"It's not what you think baby girl." He whispered and then paused. "I was losing my mind when I couldn't reach you or find you." He added and the desperation in his voice made my throat tighten with emotion anew. "I'm sorry." I said, "No, don't apologize." He soothed. We stayed like that, in each other's arms for a long moment. When I shifted, there was a moment of hesitation then he released me.

I sunk back onto the beach, picking up his hat; it must've fallen off. "They suit you." I said, as I turned the black hat in my hands. My voice still not completely normal "Then again I've always told you how sexy you look in them." I added, and then looked up at him with a smile. He silently watched me, probably gauging my mood.

"I remember you telling me you didn't use to like them, let alone wear them." I said, and then nodded "I know now, she's the reason you started wearing them, she made you like them." I added with a sad smile. He fell to his knees in front of me, "You've got it all wrong about her Zoe, and I know that's my fault for not telling you about her..." he trailed off, shaking his head, "But you have to understand, I never cared for her, wanted and loved her like I do you. It wasn't a real engagement; it was a big mistake, a big misunderstanding..."

"Andrew." I stopped him, dropping his hat to cup his face in both hands. "Breathe." I said and he paused, hanging his head. "I keep doing this, not telling you stuff because I want to protect you, keep you happy. But when you find out—" he looks at me, his gaze close and level with mine "—and you always have a damn way of finding out, it hurts you so badly and it scares the shit out of me." He said, lost for words I just stared back.

"When Sarah told me what happened and I couldn't reach you, so many worse case scenarios ran through mind." He murmured, "What if you're hurt somewhere? What if someone kidnapped you? What if you left me? What if this time you don't forgive me?"

A tear rolled out at the anguish in his tone, I stroked his hair, "We've both made choices, did things that hurt the other, but we always forgive each other and move passed it, that's part of being married." I said, my voice thick with emotion, "I was going to come back to you, I swear. I just needed a minute to cry it out; it hurt, realizing that she was the love of your life while I'm just..."

He cut me off shaking his head vigorously "It's only ever been you, it will always be you, only you." He said and I nodded then I paused.

"Even if it was true, it wouldn't have changed anything, what mattered is that you love me now and I love you. I didn't want to push you away anymore, I couldn't afford to for the sake of our baby." I said one of my hands falling from his face to my stomach. "It needs you, I need you." My voice broke and he took my mouth, urgently and desperately.

The kiss mirroring both our ravaged emotions, "I would've come after you one more time." He breathed into me, crushing me to his chest, supporting my weight on his lap. "I wouldn't have let you let me go." His tongue and mouth frantic to possess mine "Because I can't live without you baby girl." He breathed and I whimpered.

When it became too much I wrenched my mouth free and he buried his head in the crook of my neck. "I'm sorry." He said; he was apologizing for so many things. I stroked his silky soft brown hair, swallowing hard, "I love you." It seemed like the only adequate reply.

We paused a little, “Later, okay? Now people must be wondering where we are.” I said, “How many people know I was gone?” I asked, “Its just Sarah and Maddy.” He said, “They must be worried.” I said, I made a move but he wouldn’t budge. “They can spare another fifteen minutes.” he said then pulled out his phone, for sure to text one of them, let them know we’re okay. He put it away and I sat back into him, his chin resting at the top of my head.

I glanced at my watch and smiled a little, “Two minutes left, anything you want to let go of now would be a pretty good time.” I said and he chuckled a little, “Nothing, I love every single damn thing about this life with you.” He said and I nuzzled into him. From the distance I could hear them start counting down and I smiled when Andrew softly counted down for us too.

Suddenly the sky above us was a lit with elaborate fireworks. “Happy New Year Andrew.” I said, my love, my huracán. I felt him plant one to my head and we just sat there watching the display, and despite the emotional harrow just an hour ago, it was perfect.

CHAPTER 19

"You sure you don't want to go home?" Andrew asked again and I shook my head. "I'm okay and as long as you are too, we're not leaving." I said, "It's New Years, and there's a party full of people you haven't seen in a while. Me too." I said and he frowned, "I only care about you." He said, and I smiled, "And I love you for it, but we get to see each other everyday, them not so much." I added, glad to see my LBD wasn't showing evidence of the harsh treatment it received tonight. I wasn't sure the rest of me was still in tact as well.

I'm almost too scared to look at my face right now. I'll fix whatever needs fixing but I'm determined for this night to kick ass regardless. I placed Andrew's hat back on him and he smiled at me, "Lets go dance the night away Mr. Wright." I said, smiling back.

Sarah and Maddy intercepted us before we headed back up to the party. "We've got her." Maddy snapped at Andrew when he took too long to let me go. Her tone sharper than she would've probably liked, but she didn't look remorseful either. Sarah looked down and I shot Andrew an apologetic look but he slightly shook his head at me. In any circumstance Maddy and Kay always took my side, not caring if they had the whole story or not. It's always been like that with us, and it's why our sisterhood is so strong.

Andrew knew that as well, hence he didn't take offense when she went full on mama bear on him. "I love you." I mouthed to him before the two dragged me to God knows where. We ended up in a nice empty bathroom and I got a look at myself, I wasn't as bad as I'd imagined. My mascara had run due to the crying and my lips were swollen and my lipstick was slightly smudged due to Andrew's treatment of my mouth with that agonizing kiss.

Maddy had opened all of our bags, picking what she'll use; Sarah pushed a closed trash bin off the wall and brought it to me, "Sit." Maddy ordered and I obeyed. "My goodness Zoe, are you okay?" she asked and I managed a smile for her. "I'm fine now." I reassured. "You don't look fine, you look awful." She said, starting on fixing me up. I thanked my lucky stars she was here right now. "I swear to God, just say the word girl. I'm calling Kay, and we're rearranging his handsome face." She said.

"Hold your horses, I love that face." I said, trying to tease her out of her worried state. Maddy sighed, "I know Zoe, but look what he does to you." She said softly, waving a hand at me and I looked down. I love Andrew with a dangerous intensity and sometimes the blowbacks are just as devastating. "You didn't see him Maddy, when he couldn't find her..." Sarah trailed off shaking her head and I flinched.

They both didn't see him, on his knees in front of me, so wrecked. Its not often Andrew cuts himself open like that but when he does, it shatters me.

"Just don't be too hard on him. Besides you can't tell me that Jeremy doesn't drive you nuts sometimes." Sarah went on.

Maddy pursed her lips stubbornly, "Yeah well, I don't have to like it." She said, "And I love you for that." I said, "But can you keep your claws away from my man for the rest of the night?" I asked, and she rolled her eyes, "Fine." She said, "But I want to know what the hell went on." She added.

I looked up as she reapplied my mascara, "Of course him not telling me had upset me but I was more upset that Cece was the one who got away and I'm just the one he's settling for." I

said, "I had it wrong." I added. "So they weren't engaged?" Maddy asked. "They were but it's more complicated than that, he wanted to explain further but I'd had enough of the heavy stuff for New Years, we can pick it up some other time." I said.

"I just want to have fun and forget all of this." I went on.

"How did you find out about the engagement in the first place?" Sarah asked, "Ana blurted it out." I said and Maddy stilled, "Her again!" she squealed, "Oh hell no, where's Kay when you need her?" she added, "No need to call your other friend Maddy, I'd gladly give that one an ass kicking myself." Sarah said shocking me a little.

"No, it's not like that, she looked genuinely freaked out." I said, "She practically begged me not to tell Andrew she blabbed." I added.

Maddy snorted grabbing my lipstick, "Yeah well, she's just trying to save her own skin." Maddy said, "She knows that if Andrew found out she nearly screwed him over twice her ass is toast." She added.

Maddy carefully reapplied my lipstick, pausing slightly, "Do I want to know what happened to your lips?" She asked and I felt my face heat up, "No." I quickly said, inducing a soft chuckle out of Sarah.

We went back to the party upstairs and it was still going strong, Ana was there as well, looking too tense for such a festive mood. Well I wasn't going to put her mind at ease if that's what she was hoping for. "You and your hubby pulled quite a disappearing act there." Cole said to me and I gave him a smile. "Were married Cole, we don't have to answer to anyone." I said, Isaac chuckled and Scott patted Cole, "She got you there my friend." He said.

I walked over to Andrew sitting next to him and he pulled me closer.

"Yeah but once you disappear for some time..." Gia trailed off to a flurry of suggestive noises and eyebrow wiggling. Andrew was paying them no attention; I looked at Maddy and Jeremy, the only other married couple here. "Help us out here?" I asked, "You're on your own on this one." Maddy teased and Jeremy shrugged.

The conversation shifted once more and another thing I noted was that Cece wasn't as overly friendly with me like she was, like she's suddenly wary of me now. I don't know if Ana told her what was going on, but it seemed the logical explanation. I can understand Ana being a little tense but her?

"Stop hovering." I said to Andrew then turned my gaze on him, "They already think we were up to no good." I added and he sighed then shifted out of my personal space a little. I watched him regard Maddy a little before looking back at me, "I'm sure Maddy had tons to say about me," He said and I shrugged, "Don't worry about it, you know my two friends, they hardly need any provocation." I said and he raised an eyebrow at me.

"Don't sidestep it." He said and I sighed, "She thinks you're toxic to me sometimes." I said, expecting him not to make much of it. He paused,

"I 'am." He agreed somberly, I frowned "That's nonsense and you know it," I retorted then took a second to control voice and expression, "If you're toxic then I'm poison ivy to you, and neither comparison is correct." I added.

"And to think Maddy is the sweeter one of the three of you." He said, "If Kay was here she would've thrown her heels at me," He added dryly and I smiled at him, "I would've protected you." I said and his brows furrowed and I knew that look, "Don't, don't do that. The guilt, all the heavy stuff we're leaving them for now." I said to him. "Okay." He said kissing my head.

"Who wants to take us on in a game of pool?" I called out. "Cole?" I asked, "I'm staying clear of him for a while." He said shooting Andrew a dark look and Andrew grinned at him. "I'll take you on, Cece?" Scott asked and she smiled, "Yeah, let these two bring it," She said and Andrew stood up, and chuckled "Your death." He said and I grinned. "What he said." I added.

"Aww venomous banter, I love it, makes for an interesting game!" Maddy called out and I winked at her, pool was one of the few I could be confident about.

Scott and Cece put up a good fight but we beat them without breaking a sweat. Everyone also wanted their pound of flesh but we beat them too. Andrew and I had fun and we danced all night.

I woke up with a stiff neck and I tried not to stir too much and wake Andrew up, who fell asleep or rather passed out with his head on my lap. We were still at the party and the people who hadn't left had crashed right here. Some few strong souls were awake I noted. I chuckled inwardly, this seemed like the crazy nights I should've had back in my varsity days but was too busy being a nerd instead.

"You're up." Cece walked around to face me, everyone looked like a zombie walking except her.

"Yeah." I said, "You don't look half bad." She said, that was something I guess, but unlike practically everyone here, I'm not hung-over but with the emotional rollercoaster I had last night, I felt I might as well be.

"And you don't look bad *at all*." I said and she shot me a smile, "Yeah, shamefully I do this every fortnight, so I've developed a resistance." She said and I nodded. She paused for a minute, looking at Andrew on my lap. "Is he asleep? Can we talk?" she asked, my hand went into his hair, gently stroking him. "Oh yeah, he's dead beat, and hung-over so we're in the clear." I said.

"Ana told me that she told you about my engagement to him." She said, "Listen I want you to know that there wasn't anything to it, it was never like that between him and I." she said then looked at him in a way that had my hand stilling for a second. Then I decided to cut her some slack; no sane woman would be immune to him. "He's a great guy, he was still at a time he considers to be the darkest period for him. I'd be lying if I said I didn't wish there had been more between us." She said.

"And now?" I asked, and she looked up at me, "Now we're just friends, I'd let go of that notion when he left Europe." She said. I nodded, "Ana said you broke it off." I said and she gave a self-deprecating smile. "He's too much of a gentleman for his own good." She said, "I wasn't so keen on the embarrassment of getting engaged and dumped in a space of forty-eight four hours, even if it wasn't real, so he went along with it for about two to three months." She said.

"Not a lot of people knew about it but he let everyone think I broke it off when the time came. I don't think he cared either way." She added. "But I appreciated it, a guy like him

dumps you, and you look sad and pathetic. You dump *him*, and you're given props and admiration." She went on.

I nodded, that's always the case unfortunately, Andrew must've figured that out too and wanted to spare her. That is so him, always protecting the people he cares about.

"I meant what I said before. I'm glad he found you." She said, and then looked at him, "He deserves to be happy." She added. I gave her a small smile, gently toying with his silky brown hair. "Yes he does."

CHAPTER 20

Andrew's POV

The beginning of the year, work wise is always the busiest, the most exciting. Building on foundations that are already there and laying out new ones. There was a time when I wanted nothing to do with this company and anything related to it. For me, it was the enemy, my father had loved it, nurtured it while I lay forgotten.

Something had shifted between him and I when he'd come down to Port Elizabeth. It wasn't much, but it's a step in the right direction. I sighed, walking to stand just inches away from the glass walls of my office, looking at the slightly overcast skyline of Sandton. My mother, wherever she is would want me to bury the hatchet with him, just like my beautiful wife.

Sometimes I wish she was still alive, she would've loved Zoe and visa versa. At times I slip and screw things up with Zoe, something I think I'd avoid doing if I had my mother's guidance sometimes. She was exceptional at it too, showing me right from wrong. And when she died I'd lost my way, its only after I left Europe and came back that I decided to get my shit together.

I cracked my neck; I cannot think about that time in my life and not shudder in anger and shame. A new city every week, the parties, the booze, the drugs. I pick and choose what I tell Zoe about that period and because of it, she'd been crushed when she found out about my wayward engagement to Cecelia. Cecelia and I were good friends back then, I think also because she reminded me of Dena when I was younger.

It was one of those wild nights, I don't remember much about it, but we were talking nonsense, then it shifted to us, and that we'd be perfect for each other. In that stupor we were actually convinced. Before Zoe and besides Betty and Martin, I'd basically been alone for most of my life since my mother died. I guess I wanted to know what it feels like to have someone, even for little while. So in a drunken haze I asked her to marry me.

"Did you sleep with her?" Zoe had asked when I told her, her soft dark brown eyes wary. No, it was never like that between us, and when I was sober enough to think, I knew I did a stupid thing. I'd never understood why we weren't on the same page about ending it quickly and quietly. But after hearing her tell Zoe how she'd felt about it when they both thought I had passed out, I realized she was hoping it would work out. Despite that mess we got out of it friends, I'm still glad for that; she's a good person.

The last straw for me, I remember being high on some couch at a party, and I was so angry. Angry at my mother for dying on me, for driving that night, for not paying attention. Angry with her because when she died, she took dad with her, leaving me with nothing.

I woke up in bed with two girls I've never seen in my life, feeling like I'd taken a hammer to the head multiple times. I felt ashamed and I felt dirty, all the while I wondered what Betty and Martin would think if they saw me, but worse of all, what my mom would think.

I had finished my one-year contract with Guess at that time and I was scheduled for a go-see with Armani, who've been after me for months. I didn't even go, hell I hardly even said goodbye before catching the next flight back home. I decided to enroll at the University of

Pretoria and I'd enjoyed my two years there, it gave me meaning and a purpose. I had no idea I'd be rewarded for that decision when I met Zoe.

I still remember that day like it was yesterday, I can still smell the subtle floral scent of her, luring me in. She must've thought I was insane, how I couldn't stop staring. She looked like a dream in that pretty white sundress, like *my* dream. I was never the same since.

Zoe is everything to me, my whole world revolves around her, and for me the sun rises and sets with her. This year I know I won't forget either, the one my first child would be born in. I saw myself smile in the reflection of the glass wall. A knock sounded on my office door before Pete, my admin officer, walked in.

"Here's the dossier you asked on Mopanie Productions and the boss." He said and I walked over to him, "Thank you." I said, taking the file from him before he walked back out. I've made it a rule of mine to know every single detail, even the ones considered insignificant; about a person I'm considering doing business with.

Kabelo Motaung is the founder and head of Mopanie Productions, a relatively new production company but it was growing and it has immense potential. Wright Incorporated is a conglomeration of companies from the most profitable industries on the continent. Its reach is vast, we have our hand in practically every sector, but the entertainment industry is one of a few my father never touched on.

This Motaung guy wants Wright Inc. to take his company under its wing. We get offers everyday but there are steep requirements these businesses must meet before we can even consider investing in them. This guy has missed one or two of them, but he's been hauling my people the whole of last year. Such persistence I appreciate, and his ambition for even trying to get Wright Inc.'s support, so I decided to have a look for myself.

From what I've gathered so far the company is moving in the right direction, its recognized, but because its only been established five years ago, so it hasn't yet gained a proper foothold on the industry. We can help with that, and help cement their place among the power players in the industry.

It's a risk to take them on so early, hence I'm looking through all the facts and figures regarding it; all in all I have a good feeling about it.

I was in a small meeting in my conference room when the telephone rang, Maggie my secretary, knows not to disturb during meetings. "Yes." I answered, after excusing myself. "Sorry to disturb Mr. Wright, there's a woman named Kamogelo here to see you." She said and I stilled for a second. Kay was here to see me? Interesting. "She isn't in any of your appointments so..." "She's my wife's friend, show her to my office, I'll be fifteen minutes." I said then hung up.

I made my way back to my office when the meeting ended; whatever brought Kay here must be personal and important to her. Her choosing to see me here of all places meant Zoe doesn't know and she wants to keep it that way. I walked in and found her on the visitors' chair. She gave me a polite smile, "Your view of Sandton is kick ass." She said and I smiled back.

"Thank you. This is a pleasant surprise." I said walking over to take my seat opposite her. "I'm the wife's BFF, tolerating me is part of your husbandly duties." She teased and I chuckled. "What can I do for you?" I asked and she smiled "I think you know why I'm here. You and I have no business seeing each other." She said, "Except for Zoe." I finished for her.

"Except for Zoe." She agreed, "I heard about what happened in Cape Town." She added. Kay was a lot like Zoe in the essence that they both cut through the bullshit pretty quickly. I should've seen this coming, and on the other hand I did. These girls have always had each other's backs, you mess with one of them, you mess with all of them. They've been living by that rule for years.

They crush anyone who hurts a member of their sisterhood. I remember Kay and Zoe going after some bastard for Maddy some years ago. "No, he must be taught a lesson." Zoe had said to me when I'd asked her not to get involved. With her vehemence and protectiveness, I knew trying to convince her would be pointless.

Now I'm the offender this time, my dishonesty had hurt Zoe, badly, and just because she forgave me doesn't mean they did too. They both think I'm toxic to her—God knows I don't want to be, I try not to be—but I can see their point, and some twisted part of me wondered what took them so long to come after me.

I would've protected you, Of course; Zoe is what's been holding them back.

I chuckled inwardly, bitterly; I deserve this.

My wife loves me too much to properly retaliate, but her best friends I know won't hold anything back. I'm prepared to take it like a man, how can I not, when they have the woman I love's best interests at heart?

CHAPTER 21

"Where's Maddy?" I asked, "I'm flying solo on this one." Kay humored me dryly then she breathed out wearily. She wasn't going to enjoy this anymore than I was, I should've taken some form of comfort in that but I didn't. "Listen Andrew, we know you love her, we do." She said, "But Zoe, she loves you too much." she added. I sighed inwardly, if she only knew, it wasn't possible for Zoe to love me more than I do her. My love for her is an overwhelming force, It cripples me, leaves me breathless, helpless.

I left the drugs and got high on her instead, the difference being that I can't stop and I don't want to. I must have her, I need to have her or I'll waste away.

"And when shit like that happens, she doesn't fully see what it does to her, but we do." She said, "You do too." She added quietly. My brows furrowed, she was hitting home, "I would never intentionally hurt her." I said, "But you do anyway." She said, "We want you to fix that." She added.

"I'm a man Kay, unfortunately we can be obtuse. And as much as I wish it wasn't the case, I can't guarantee that wont ever hurt her." I said, and Kay shook her head, anger shimmering in her eyes a little. "Oh you are far from stupid Andrew." She said, "You were engaged to someone else and not telling Zoe, that's not being stupid, that's making a calculated choice. And its *long* you've been making calculated choices Andrew, that end up hurting my friend." She tersely said.

She's right, I always knew that, and I wanted her to claw and tear at me because of it, because Zoe couldn't.

"You think I'm being selfish." I stated more than asked, "I *know* you're being selfish, and I pray for her sake, and yours—believe it or not—that she doesn't come to resent you for it." She said, and I flinched. "Now I don't know what's the driving force behind this and I honestly don't care. I don't want to pry into your business but its only when it badly affects Zoe that I have a problem." She added.

I told Zoe that I don't tell her things because I want to protect her, keep her happy, but what if I'm just trying to protect myself? Trying to keep myself happy? What if I don't tell her because I'm afraid of losing her? Afraid that she wouldn't love me if she knew all the ugly bits and pieces of me.

I 'am selfish, like father like son; perhaps I'm also capable of doing what my father did, is that why I find it hard to forgive him? Why I can't look him in the eye? Because I'm afraid I'll see so much of myself in him?

"What would you have me do?" I asked, my voice unjustifiably hard due to my train of thinking just now. "She's pregnant!" Kay snapped, "Any form of emotional strain, especially from you, is completely unacceptable." She hissed, misreading the edge in my voice for stubbornness.

"I know." I said softly, I'm hurting the woman I love and my unborn baby. "Are they better off without me? Do you want me to let them go? Because can't do that Kay." I said, that's the one thing I cant do for them and wasn't that a testament to my selfishness?

"No." she said more softly, "Hell no, Zoe would kill me for even giving you the thought." She added. She paused for a while.

"You deserve them and all the happiness that they bring to you. I'm giving you shit right now, but not because I don't think you're a good guy, you are." She said, shocking me a little.

"Zoe is the toughest, most badass chick I know." She said, "But she bruises quite easily when it comes to everything Andrew Wright." She added, "I don't understand it and I don't have to." She went on, "But just threat carefully, for her sake...and yours."

I nodded stiffly and she stood up, and I did too, "Thank you." I said and her eyebrows shot up, "For being her friend and looking out for her, I know you're not doing it for me but I appreciate it." I said and she nodded, "And thank you." She said, "What ever for?" I asked. "You may screw up but you make her happy." She replied, we shook hands and she walked out.

I got back home later than normal; I walked into the great room and found Zoe in the kitchen, looking into a few cupboards. She was wearing a pair of shorts, showing off her great legs and a Real Madrid club shirt. This was one of those times she went barefoot around the house.

She looked up at me and smiled, left whatever she was looking for and came over to kiss me, instinctively I wrapped my arms around her waist deepening the kiss. She pulled away, "How was your day?" she asked, "Eventful." I said, unable to manage a smile. "No doubt, this time of the year, it's a warzone. I got out of work when I could." She said moving out of my arms. "Besides, today is one of my few lazy days." she said chuckling.

I watched her intently; I can see why Kay would want me to keep her happy. She is beautiful but when she's happy she's gorgeous, she's this bright ray of sunshine everyone wants to be around. That I want to be around for the rest of my life, "Crap." She swore closing the cupboards. "I forgot to buy popcorn and its Champion's League night." She said.

My lips curved up a little, a woman after my own heart with her love of football. I followed her to the lounge and sat next to her. I know her favorite crime drama was about to start. "I bought a pack of Oreos the other day, I can't remember where I put them." I said and she gave an exaggerated gasp. "Keep those things away from me." She said and I chuckled, "You let me overdose on them." She accused, "How can I refuse you something you love so much?" I said, "Says the dealer to the addict." She said and I chuckled.

She scooted into my arms as her show started, I wasn't paying it any attention as I kept thinking about my conversation with Kay. "Zoe?" I asked, when it went to commercial "Uhm?" was her reply. "Do I make you happy?" I asked, she sat up and looked at me. Her brows furrowed slightly then she smiled, "You make me the happiest woman alive." She said, "Why do you ask?"

I gave her a smile, "Just wanted to hear you say it," I said then motioned for her to come back into me. She did after a slight pause, I could hear the wheels turn in that pretty little head of hers, trying to analyze the question. I can't have that.

"Because I want to change the channel." I added and she chuckled, "Not *that* happy Mr. Wright." She joked dryly and I chuckled too.

* * *

I sat across from Kabelo Motaung, interviewing him more about Mopanie Productions. I didn't really have to do this myself or at all, but I wanted to know this guy, hear his plans for

the company going forward. Part of doing good business is knowing the person you're in bed with and I like what I'm seeing so far. He's passionate and driven, and he has big plans for the company, all he needs is the proper support. One I can give him and I must say I'm very tempted.

I didn't make him any promises, but he can take me conducting this interview myself as a very good sign.

After it was over we shook hands and I showed him out of my office, all the way down to the reception floor still talking. We were about to bid each other goodbye when my wife came in through the electric doors. Looking professionally chic in a grey high waist pencil skirt and red silk blouse, her legs awesome in one of those sexy high heels she always wears. She was carrying a Nixon Brooks briefcase, so I caught her on duty.

She gave me crap about approaching her firm and requesting her in particular to be my company's official advisor. I'm her first ever major client; I'd be lying if I said that doesn't give me some degree of pleasure. Getting to see her roam these offices sometimes is worth the heat I got. Although she never tells me when she comes, in a bid to avoid me. I sap her concentration she'd said.

Whether she wants to believe it or not, she's brilliant at what she does, that's why I wanted her and that's why Nixon Brooks poached her out of O.B.D.

I suddenly realized I wasn't the only one staring at my beautiful wife.

"Tumi?" Kabelo called out, shocking me.

Zoe looked towards us, her eyes narrowing in confusion when she saw me, realizing the voice calling her wasn't mine. She walked towards us, "Tumi Ritsuri. It is you." Kabelo said with a smile and Zoe's eyebrows shot up after a slight pause. "KB? Oh my God." She exclaimed with an incredulous chuckle.

CHAPTER 22

"You remember me, that's good." He said, going in for the hug and Zoe returned it awkwardly, interesting. She looked at me, her gaze full of questions. Well I have some of my own. "Of course I remember, how have you been?" she said.

"Good yourself?" He said, "Great." She said, that was for me and I smiled, "Wow Nixon Brooks? You've done well for yourself Tumi, I'm proud of you." He said, my smile fell, I didn't like the way he said her name.

"Thank you." She said, "You look phenomenal by the way, I didn't think it was possible more so." He said; was he seriously flirting with my wife, in front of me? Zoe and I aren't in the media a lot, so its possible he doesn't know. Given that he called her by her maiden name, I'm guessing that's the case.

Zoe must've realized that because she raised her left hand, pretending to brush away at her something on her forehead. Giving him a clear view of the prominent diamond on her ring finger. I chuckled inwardly, so this is how she wards them off. Subtle but effective, I saw him tense for a second. "Still smooth huh?" she said and he shrugged. "You're married." He stated and she smiled widely, that was for me again. "Yes I am, have been for three years now." She said and he smiled, or rather pretended to, and it was clear then.

They knew each other long before we met, he had the hots for her, still does from the looks of things, and did she ever reciprocate? I wasn't sure and I didn't like not knowing. I didn't like this, period.

"Congratulations." He said, "Thank you." She said. "Who's the lucky bastard?" he asked, Zoe's eyes widened slightly and I smiled. "Uh you're looking at him." She said and Kabelo turned to look at me, his shock almost comical "Oh. My apologies Mr. Wright." He said, mortified I could tell. I shrugged, "I am lucky." I said, "I'll have my people contact you on any further developments." I said, putting an end to this little reunion.

He was smart enough to get the hint he should leave, "Of course, thank you for your time." He said when we shook hands. He turned back to Zoe, "It was good to see you Tumi." He said, opting for a handshake this time. Very smart indeed.

"You too." She replied and he walked out, sure his day is ruined. He had nothing to worry about, unless he gave me reason to screw him over, and this wasn't.

"Mr. Wright." Zoe said, in what I'd come to know as her advisor voice, and then walked towards the elevators. I followed her.

My employees always stare whenever I'm with her, why I'm not sure. Were they trying to get a glimpse into my personal life? How I am with her? How she affects me? If I transform into a completely different person?

My head of P.R says I come across as intimidating, untouchable and that prompts people to want to know what makes me tick. And the woman in front of me certainly makes me tick.

I got into the empty cart with her and she pressed for floor eighteen, she wasn't throwing me a bone. She made me a deal, when it comes to her work with Wright Inc. I stay far away; she only deals with the relevant people. In return she relaxes her rule about remaining strictly professional here. It was subjected to only when we're alone, so when the elevator doors closed, we were officially alone.

I pulled her against me, kissing her hard. I could kiss Zoe until I die and even then it still wouldn't have been enough.

She pulled away, "You made a deal." I reminded her, kissing the soft skin of her neck, breathing in deeply. Her perfume mixed with her own unique scent was a potent aphrodisiac. "You left me no choice." She moaned. I pulled myself away from her, she was right in making that rule. I wasn't sure if she made it for herself too but I can't touch her without getting carried away.

I stood a safe distance from her, folded my arms, and settled for devouring her with my eyes instead; letting them rake over the soft sensual shape of her mouth, the elegant length of her neck. The enticing swell of her chest, her sinful curves to the smoothness of her legs.

"Who the hell is he?" I asked, "You should know, you're obviously doing business with him." She said, catching her breath.

I love how she responds to me, like she can't help it; it's a huge turn on. "That's not what I mean and you know it." I said then cursed inwardly when the elevator pinged its arrival on her floor, she slightly smirked getting off. "My office when you're done, Mrs. Wright." I said, using my client voice. I pressed for my floor and smirked at her shocked expression before the doors closed.

I made my way back to my office, wryly aware that I'm semi hard, *sorceress*. I thought.

Two hours passed before a knock sounded on my door and Zoe walked in. I stood up, "Well, you've bullied me in here, so here I am," She said and I chuckled at her annoyed tone. "I never bully, I just do things with intent." I said and she shook her head with wry humor. She sat on one of the chairs, "Kabelo Motaung." I said leaning against my desk "Well done on scaring the shit out of him." She said, "He called me a bastard!" I said, feigning offense.

She chuckled, "That was funny." She said, "Ha ha, out with him." I said and she sighed. "We're both from Marapong and we went to high school together." She said, "You were friends." I stated and she confirmed by nodding. Damn, besides Isaac, Zoe told me she didn't have male friends even now; the only males she interacts with are either my friends or her colleagues.

I can see why making male friends would be problematic; they'd always want more. How could they not? She is beautiful, intelligent; she's mine, and probably other men's waking dream as well.

In this case, Kabelo. She must've really liked him to make the effort to be friends with him and hadn't he proven why in my office earlier? He's charismatic, driven and smart and now I'm jealous because she'd seen that too and liked it.

"Did you date him?" I asked, even though deep down I know she didn't, the mere thought of him or any other man with her made me insane. She gaped for a second, "No, you know I never had a boyfriend before you." She said, "No, I know you'd never had sex before me," I clarified. "You're being ridiculous." She said and I shrugged, maybe I was but I don't handle jealousy any better than she does. "He made a pass at you." I stated again. "And our friendship didn't survive the awkward phase of after I turned him down." She said.

Or maybe it wasn't given enough time, they went their separate ways after all, that couldn't have helped. Had they stayed friends even after she enrolled in Tuks, would my chance with her have been threatened? "I like him, now that has gone to shit." I said.

"Don't be jealous on me." She warned, "Why the hell not?" I asked, she stood up, "Because its pointless." She said wrapping her warms around my waist and kissed me, "You're the only one to have ever made this heart race." She added, she nibbled at my bottom lip; I resisted the urge to take her. "I better be, or else his ass is gone, I don't care how good he is." I said and she pulled away throwing her arms up.

"You're impossible." She said in Pedi, her mother tongue, we don't speak it often. I think the fact that I know it so well still creeps her out. That's the only ever time I'm positive she does see color. "And you're beautiful." I replied in the like and she smiled despite herself.

CHAPTER 23

Zoe's POV

I planned to spend the whole of Saturday with Kay at her house in North Ridding. The second I walked in, little Leda ran towards me, I picked her up, "Wow, you've grown a little bit more each time I see you." I said to her, walking into the living room and she smiled at me. "Me grow." She said and Kay chuckled, "Remember when we were like that?" I said to her.

"Oh yeah." She said, "Its only in your late teens that it hits you, getting older isn't all that cool." She added and I chuckled. I put Leda down and something else caught her attention. Tshepo came in from the backyard, we greeted each other before he found his daughter and went upstairs with her, teasing her as they went.

Opposites really do attract, Tshepo is a calm, collected soul, while Kay is loud and in your face. I don't know how many hours we spent just talking but it was later in the afternoon when Tshepo told Kay Leda's asleep upstairs and that he's going to meet up with a friend. He walked out after saying he'll be an hour or so. "I was hoping you'd show up here with it." Kay said, resuming our conversation about Andrew's Lamborghini. Taking a sip of her soda

"I'm not going anywhere near that thing, for now at least." I said, "Andrew's been trying to get me to drive it for a month now." I said and Kay chuckled. "Why haven't you though? Seriously." She asked, "It scares me." I said sheepishly and she nodded in understanding.

She picked up the last of the potato chips and the bowl and stood up with it. I continued thinking about my husband; maybe its hormones or I'm just seeing things but something's up with him. He's very good at hiding it, so much so that I think it's all in my head, but I feel it. "No, no, what is that?" Kay said, waving a hand at my face and I realized I'm frowning.

I sighed, "Its Andrew." I said when she sat back down. "Something's up with him, I just can't put my finger on it." I said and her gaze shifted a bit. "Did something happen?" she asked, "That's the thing, everything is perfect or at least I think it is, but I'm getting these weird vibes off of him sometimes." I said, and then shook my head. Then I noticed Kay is doing something she does when either she's feeling guilty or she's about to deliver some bad news.

"Why aren't you looking me in the eye?" I asked, "What are you talking about?" she asked, smiling. Her denial did it for me, my eyes widened, "What did you do?" I asked, her smile fell "Why do you assume I did anything?" she said defensively. I didn't have the patience for this,

"What did you do Kay?" I asked more sharply. She sighed, "Okay, okay. I went to go see him at work, and I knocked some sense into him on how he handled Cape Town, among other things." She said, "You did what?" I gasped.

I can only imagine how that went down, Kay can be vicious, I've seen her in action myself, helped her out.

"He must love you, he took it like a man and I'm sure he doesn't take crap from anyone." She mused, of course he took it like a man, its Andrew, he probably even thought he deserved it and worse. Kay has caused more damage than she can understand. "When was this?" I asked, "I don't know two, maybe three weeks ago." She said.

Do I make you happy? I knew I wasn't imagining the hopelessness in his tone that night. I put both my hands on my forehead, standing up, "Aww Kay, why would you do that?" I

moaned. She stood up too, "No Zoe, he's been long overdue a chat." She said, "The only reason Maddy and I waited this long is because of your reaction right now. Its well within our sisterhood rights to sort him out if he's hurting you." She added.

We have each other's backs no matter what, that's the motto of our friendship, our sisterhood. We're screwing you over if you hurt one of us. But this is not the same thing; Andrew is not the enemy, they have it all wrong. "Of course Maddy's involved." I muttered, "I don't trust you not to sugarcoat for him, but I know she'd tell me what really went on." She said. I can't believe this.

"I told you, the engagement was a mistake, and it never meant anything." I said, "Yeah but he should've told you about it, instead you had to find out from that cow he calls a friend." She said, "Let's not forget all the other shit that has left you in pieces." She added, anger coloring her tone.

Oh God, it was bad. My poor Andrew.

"You don't get it Kay." I said, "He doesn't hurt me on purpose." I added, and it's not his fault I'm irrational over him. "He loves you, he doesn't mean to hurt you, we know all of that." She said "But you love him too much to stand up to his shit, so we will." She added and I felt my own anger rise.

"I've just about had it with you and Maddy clawing at him." I bit out, "I'm not innocent in this, and I've done things that have hurt him too." I added, "That's not what this is about..." "I don't care!" I snapped. "That's how you justify it! It's okay because you've hurt him too? He can own up to it, I'll give him that, but you?"

I shook my head, trying to calm myself down.

"You don't understand okay, you don't understand *him*." I said, "He's been through enough shit in his life, he doesn't need anymore from my two best friends. Especially about me." I added, "Zoe we..."

"No! I am done!" I cut her off, "Don't you ever speak to my husband like that ever again." I said then turned and stormed out. Unshed angry tears stinging my eyes. Angry with my two best friends because their hearts are in the right place but they've done more harm than good.

Angry with Andrew because I know he didn't defend himself, angry with him for taking it silently and letting it eat him up inside. I'd had a chance to calm down during the drive back to Bryanston.

I walked into the great room, finding Andrew in the kitchen, picking his pots and placing them on the stove. He flashed me a big smile when he saw me, "You're back early." He said, "I was about to start on dinner, fancy anything in particular?" he asked, I just shook my head walking over to the counter. His eyes narrowed slightly then continued prepping.

"Why didn't you tell me Kay spoke to you?" I asked quietly and he'd been looking for something in the fridge when he stilled for a second. "Now that wouldn't be taking it like a man, would it?" he said, coming out with a pack of chicken breasts. "You don't have to take anything. She had no right to do that." I said and he stopped what he was doing.

"Don't be mad at her, she has your best interests at heart." He said, "I know that, but she's going about it the wrong way." I said, "I've been wondering what the hell's been going on, now I know." I added.

"Don't worry about it okay? Kay said some things I needed to hear, end of story." he said. I walked over to him, "Nonsense, she doesn't understand you." I said, and I was surprised when he flinched away from me, putting the whole counter between us. "Hell even I don't understand myself." He said, his tone edgy "I don't understand why I keep hurting you, all that I know is that I love you so so much and I want you to be happy, preferably with me." He added.

I flinched at the pain in his voice, I smiled gently at him, "That's good enough for me." I said, trying to close the distance he'd put between us. "No its not!" he snapped, and I froze. "It shouldn't have to be." He added, and then he ran a hand through his hair roughly. "It has always been and still is so easy for me to accept that." He said bitterly. "To let things be when you put your arms around me, and you kiss me and tell me that you love me. And that's the problem right there." He added. "Andrew..."

"I can't be here right now." He said, "Andrew!" I called out to him but he grabbed his keys and left.

I sat in our bed at around 11:10 pm and Andrew is still gone, I've been trying to read this book I bought a week ago but the words were bumping off of me. All I can think of is my missing husband; I'd tried to give him time to himself. But I can't stop worrying and remembering how upset he'd been. I was about to grab my phone and call him when I heard his Lamborghini drive in. I breathed out with a shudder.

Minutes later he appeared in the doorway, he closed the door and leaned against it. "Hi." I said with a small smile, he regarded me warily, "You're not angry." He said. "Oh I'm angry, you had me worried." I said, "And you left me to fend for dinner myself." I teased but he didn't smile. "But I don't want to fight." I said softly. He paused, "Aren't you going to ask me where I was?" he asked and I shook my head. "It doesn't matter, as long as you're not drunk." I said.

Andrew has an inexplicable abhorrence to getting intoxicated, but I'd never seen him so upset. I placed my book on the nightstand and stretched my arms out to him. He slightly hesitated before coming towards me. He got on the bed with me and I let him rest his head on my stomach. It's almost as if he was listening, and if he listened hard enough he'd hear his baby inside me.

I'm only eight weeks along now so my body hasn't yet made any significant changes.

"I can't deal with the thought of you driving your fast cars drunk." I said, "Its my second worst fear." I said, stroking his hair, as if I'm telling a young boy a bedtime story. There was a pause, "What's your worst fear?" he asked, his voice hoarse. "Losing you." I whispered and I felt a shudder go through him. He was so quiet and still for a long moment that I thought he'd fallen asleep. "I went to Sunninghill to see Betty. We talked and I lost track of time, I'm sorry." He said, "Its okay." I said,

Knowing Betty had been there, looking after him put me more at ease.

"I want to do right by you Tumi." He said, I suddenly felt wetness on my stomach and I dreadfully realized he's crying. "I want to be good to you, good for you and our baby." He said, I sat up with him, grabbing his face in my hands forcing him to look at me. My heart broke as I

wiped the wetness away. He'd been so quiet, his voice so clear and controlled, but his face ravaged with emotion.

I leaned my forehead against his "Oh Andrew you are, my love, you are." I said, my voice thick, frantic. "Am I?" he asked, "Yes, I swear it." I said, "You're the best thing to ever happen to me, I thank God for you everyday." I added, "You have to know that, I *need* you to believe that"

He hung his head as more tears fell. "Come here." I whispered, lying back down with him again. I swallowed down my own emotion; for once I'd be his rock, his anchor. I kissed the top of his head, stroking his hair at the nape "We'll deal with this together okay?" I said using his exact words, "I'm still here, we're still here, and we're not going anywhere."

CHAPTER 24

I was in my office just about ready to knock off when I'd decided to reply Kay. I haven't spoken to her since we had that fight about Andrew. Two weeks is a long time not to talk to one's BFF. I realized then that I'd been resenting her for disturbing my bliss with Andrew. I'd forgiven him and we'd put the whole engagement thing behind us. I was in the wrong, that bliss had only been on my side, hadn't I been the one to say accepting forgiveness is hard, when it feels undeserved?

But it goes so much deeper than that for Andrew, and I feel awful having been blind to it. *Hey, can we meet?* I texted, it was only a minute before she replied, *Hi girl, yeah sure.* She wrote, *Let's meet up at our café at 6pm* I texted back *I'll see you then.*

I then called Andrew's phone, I'm guessing he's still in the office as well. "Baby girl." He answered; I smiled at the sound of his voice. "I'm meeting up with Kay at six so I'll be a little late." I said, "No problem, I'm glad you're reaching out to her." He said; he's been the one that has been prompting me to. "You miss her." He added and I sighed, "Yeah I do." I said, "I gotta go, I love you." I said, "I love you too," he said back to me in my mother tongue then hung up.

I found Kay already waiting when I got to the café; she stood up when I approached. We paused in front of each other before making sad faces and hugging for a while, "I'm sorry." Kay said, "Me too." I added. We broke apart and took our chairs. "How have you been?" I asked, "Besides you being mad at me, and feeling awful, I'm okay. You?" She said.

"Besides dealing with the backlash, I'm okay too." I said with a small smile. She frowned, "I really am sorry Zoe, my intention was never to cause trouble between you and Andrew." She said, "I just thought that if I talked to him that things would change for the better." She added. "I know, and they are." I said, "How is he?" she asked and I stifled a flinch, its like she knew how painful that night was.

He hadn't cried anymore after I told him we'd deal with it together. I just held him and he'd soon fallen into an exhausted sleep. My heart ached as I watched him sleep, such ancient fatigue, it made me wonder if he'd gotten any proper sleep ever since we came back to Joburg.

"He's okay, he's really talking to me now, about how he feels." I said and Kay nodded. "I swear I wasn't as harsh as you thought." She said then frowned, "Its like he'd gotten a head start on himself before I even got there. He even thanked me." She said and I sighed wearily. "That's Andrew for you." I said and she paused.

"When you said he'd went through some shit in his life?" she said and I tensed a little. I forced myself to relax, maybe telling her a little bit will help her understand. I breathed in, "He lost his mother in a tragic car accident way too young, it hadn't been easy on him and his father ignoring him for most of that time, among other things, had really screwed with his head." I said, leaving it at that. "I remember him telling me that he'd often felt like an orphan." I added, swallowing hard.

"I'm sorry." Kay said; I shook my head at her, "He needs me Kay, I can't explain it in a way you'll understand. But he hates himself a little bit more each time I cry over him and I can't have that." I said, "You and Maddy will have to trust me on this one. There's no one anywhere who loves me, cherishes me and wants me to be happy more than he does." I added.

She nodded, "Okay." She said, "We're okay?" I checked, "We're okay." She confirmed. "Aww come give me a big hug you." She said and we stood up and hugged again.

I got back to the house; the minute I walked in I was met by the smell of deliciously cooked dinner. I'd come to find out Andrew was totally lying, when he told me he's a terrible cook. I chuckled incredulously when I saw a romantic dinner setting on the dining room table. Andrew walked over to me with a smile, "What is this?" I asked. "I believe it's a candlelit dinner for two." He said, "Okay, what's the occasion? Because I know I'm not forgetting anything." I said and he pulled up a chair for me and I went to sit down.

Andrew chuckled, "Can't a husband indulge his wife?" he asked, "We've been together for almost nine years now, I'm pretty sure the wooing phase is over." I teased. He leaned down, "I stop wooing you?" he whispered, his lips teasingly brushing along my jaw to the back of my ear before he gently caught it between his teeth.

My heart rate picked up, just daring me to lie. "No." I said with a small voice, he chuckled going to the kitchen and coming back with our food. "I only have a few months left to have you all to myself, before the little one comes and takes up all your time and attention." He said and I chuckled. "I highly doubt that." I said, Andrew's at the forefront of my every thought, he'll just have to contend with sharing.

My hand went to my stomach; my baby bump was slowly forming and starting to be visible to everybody else.

We ate, talking and laughing, but most of all fondly reminiscing about all the many beautiful moments we've had together. We hardly do that; reflect together. "This was delicious, thank you." I said, helping him clear up, and he grinned at me, "Seriously you're a much cook than me, I'm jealous." I said leaning against the counter watching him.

He chuckled, "And I'm totally hopeless with that thing." He said, referring to the grand white piano he bought for me. I smiled, getting an idea, "Come on." I said, grabbing his hand and leading him to the instrument. "You're going to teach me how to play?" he asked skeptically. I sat on the bench with him, lifting the cover over the keys.

"Yes, you can run your empire without breaking a sweat, you can manage this no problem." I said. He didn't seem convinced but he paid attention as I showed him a simple melody, on the second try he was playing it perfectly. "There you go. You're playing." I said with a smile. He stopped and looked at me, "Sing me something." He said and I paused slightly.

I've only ever sung seriously in my varsity days, but I'd hum around the house or in the shower every now and then. My voice is okay but Andrew seems to think it's amazing, like every other part of me. And suddenly knew what I wanted to sing to him, I started playing Your Song by Ellie Goulding.

My eyes ultimate between him and the keys as I sung, he was watching me so intensely and tenderly. When I finished he kissed me softly, "Thank you." He said, nuzzling his face against my neck and cheek. We stayed like that for a moment then he started singing All of Me by John Legend. I stilled for a second, realizing that I'd never really heard him properly sing and the other reason being that his voice was amazing.

I started playing the melody in time with him. His nose brushed against my neck as he sung, his voice, the lyrics and melody reverberating through me. I didn't know if it was

hormones or his singing that brought me to tears but it was getting harder to concentrate on playing.

I played the last note and a sob escaped me, "You bastard, how come you've never sung to me before?" I murmured, he rested his forehead against my temple, "I'm singing to you now." He whispered and I whimpered, leaning into him when he held me. I'm always so preoccupied and consumed with my feelings for him that I hardly stop to think about how deep *his* love for me runs.

Its times like these when I get a glimpse into that bottomless ocean, and it's such a jolt to my system.

He held me until I calmed down, "You'll have seven months of this, good luck." I said dryly and heard him chuckle softly. "You really love me, don't you?" I mused, "You're just figuring that out now?" he said wryly and it was my turn to chuckle. He paused, "I love you more than you can ever imagine baby girl." He said and I nodded, more to myself.

I didn't realize how tired I am until I yawned "Thank you." I said, "For being such a beautiful and brilliant hurricane I cant do without." I said; he paused for a second, "Okay, you need to sleep baby girl." He said, deciding its fatigue talking. I let him scoop me up into his arms, as if I weigh nothing, and he took us to our bedroom.

THE END.

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